MODERN FLIRTATIONS;

OR,

A MONTH AT HARROWGATE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF "MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS," EIGHTH THOUSAND; "MODERN SOCIETY," SIXTH THOUSAND; "HILL AND VALLEY," THIRD THOUSAND; "SCOTLAND AND THE SCOTCH," THIRD THOUSAND; "SHETLAND AND THE SHETLANDERS," SECOND THOUSAND; "HOLIDAY HOUSE," THIRD THOUSAND; "CHARLIE SEYMOUR," THIRD THOUSAND, ETC.

"I clasped my hand close to my breast,
While my heart was as light as a feather,
Yet nothing I said, I protest,
But ——— 'Madam' 'tis very fine weather!'"

Ritson's Songs.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

Under Prompter.—"Sir, the scene is set, and everything ready to begin, if you please."

Critic.

It was the rule of a celebrated equestrian, which might be adapted to authors as well as to horsemen, that every one should ride as if he expected to be thrown, and drive as if he expected to be upset. Impunity in publishing, far from rendering an author presumptuous, should tend rather to increase his timidity, the danger being greater always of venturing too much, than of hazarding too little; and the more cause any writer has to feel grateful for the lenient judgment of an enlightened public, the more circumspect should he become, not to trespass

by an obtrusive reappearance on that notice which has already perhaps been, as in respect to the author herself, beyond all expectation favourable.

An old proverb declares that "a goose-quill is more powerful than a lion's claw," and authors have been called "keepers of the public conscience;" but no influence is perhaps so extensive as that exercised by what is termed "light reading," which has now in a great measure superseded public places and theatrical entertainments, affording a popular resource with which the busiest men relax their hard-working minds, and the idlest occupy their idleness. It becomes a deep responsibility, therefore, of which the author trusts she has ever felt duly sensible, to claim the leisure hours of so many, while it is her first desire that whatever be the defects of these pages, no actual evil may be intermingled, and the cause of sound religion and morality

supported, for her feelings are best expressed in the words of the poet,

"If I one soul improve, I have not liv'd in vain."

Novel-reading, formerly considered the lowest resource of intellectual vacuity, has been lately promoted to a new place in the literary world, since men of the brightest genius as well as of the highest attainments in learning and philosophy, allow their pens occasionally to wander in the attractive regions of fiction; therefore works of imagination, no longer merely a clandestine amusement to frivolous minds, are now avowedly read and enjoyed, to beguile an idle hour, or to cheer a gloomy one, by men of science, of wisdom, and of piety. Such is the general encouragement given now to works of fancy, that, as the literary existence of authors depends on attracting readers, there will scarcely be encouragement enough soon to induce historians

and biographers to dip the pen of veracity into the ink of retrospection, while it is perhaps to be lamented that when so large a proportion of the public attention is occupied by novelists, their works being certain of instant circulation, for a very short period and for no more, few authors afford themselves time to aspire at the highest grade of imaginary composition. When such volumes are really true to nature, they convey very important truths in a form more popular than a dry sententious volume of moral precepts, and perhaps history itself can scarcely afford so graphic a portrait of human life as many of those fictitious volumes, written under the inspiration of genius, which portray in vivid colouring, the thoughts and motives by which men are internally influenced.

The Life of Cleopatra, or the Memoirs of Agrippina can afford scarcely so much direction to young ladies respecting their

views of life and manners in the present day, as might be conveyed by a judiciously-drawn portrait of that world as it is, on the stage of which they are about to be personally introduced; and a large proportion of those elaborate volumes dignified with the name of history, can only be considered in the main fictitious, because, while biographers would confidently state the private opinions, secret intentions, and real characters of illustrious men who lived and acted several hundred years ago, they cannot justly estimate the actual dispositions and motives of their own most intimate friends, nor confidently point out what circumstances have influenced the greatest events in their own day. If two authors, entertaining opposite political sentiments, were to write the history of last year, every fact recorded, and every individual mentioned must inevitably be represented, or misrepresented, according to the

writer's own private feelings, while each would believe he was writing unadulterated truth.

Thus poetry and fiction, when true to the principles of human life, exhibit the mind and soul of man visibly to the senses; and history, which has been called "the Newgate Calendar of Kings and Emperors," supplies the facts of human existence, and may be considered a portrait of men's persons and external actions.

In writing a story of domestic life, it is singular to reflect how commonly men are remembered by their eccentricities, and loved for their very faults, while the most difficult task in fiction is, to describe amiable persons so as to render them at all interesting and not utterly insipid. Probably it may be for this reason that modern writers too frequently, instead of describing the principles which ennoble human nature, and the

sentiments which embellish life, have painted in vivid colouring, all that is low, mean, and vicious in society, introducing their readers into scenes, the reality of which would be shunned with abhorrence, and flinging over vice such a mantle of genius as converts the deformities of society into subjects of interest, —unfortunately even of sympathy.

Were authors obliged hereafter, to live with the characters they create, how few would desire to share with them in such a world! Even where the intention is to represent an attractive character, it seldom appears as one which could be an agreeable acquisition to any family circle; and in works of sentiment or feeling, nothing is less successfully pictured than a generous and refined attachment, fitted to survive every trial or vicissitude of existence, between those who are to love and to trust each other for ever. Few stories could be written, if lovers in a

romance acted with the slightest degree of mutual confidence or esteem; but such narratives are generally founded on a teazing succession of narrow-minded suspicions and unwarrantable concealments on the part of heroes and heroines, who condemn each other unheard, and go through volumes of heart-breaking alienation, enough to terminate life itself, rather than ask the most simple explanation, while the reader cannot but feel a certain conviction in closing the last page, that an engagement begun with cavilling jealousies and painful recriminations, can never become productive of lasting peace.

The mothers and daughters in fashionable society have of late been so harshly stigmatized by the press, that it seems as if some authors had taken up a porcupine's quill dipped in gall, to ridicule their conduct and motives, while not a pen has yet been drawn from the scab-

bard, nor a drop of ink spilled in their justification; but the weight of censure might become greatly lightened by being more equitably divided among all who are entitled to carry a share, and in these volumes an endeavour is made to rectify the balance more justly, though with what success remains to be discovered by the author herself, as not a single friend ever sees her pages, or puts on the spectacles of criticism till after they are printed. The only peculiarity to which she makes any pretension, in once more presuming to publish, is, that avoiding all caricature, all improbability, and all personality, she has introduced a few individuals acting and thinking in the ordinary routine of every-day life, while her highest ambition is to represent in natural colours, the conduct and feelings of men elevated and ennobled by the influence of Christianity.

When Dr Johnson remarked once that

it required a clever person to talk nonsense well, Boswell replied, "Yes, sir! If you were to represent little fishes speaking, you would make them talk like great whales;" and on a similar plan, authors describing society, instead of sketching the good-humoured chit-chat and lively *persiflage* with which the business and amusements of fashionable life are carried on, too frequently fill up their dialogues with set speeches, moral essays, and long quotations, such as never are extemporized in any drawing-room, where too energetic a stroke given to the shuttlecock of conversation, makes it instantly fall to the ground. The flagrant impossibilities by which a carelessly-written narrative is carried on, destroys often at once the illusion. Persons are described, who may be overheard speaking aloud their most secret thoughts when supposing themselves alone, soliloquizing audibly in the streets, journaliz-

ing a history of their own crimes, becoming permanent guests in houses to which they have no introduction, preserving the noblest sentiments amidst the most degraded habits, and dying enlightened Christians when they have lived as dissolute infidels.

A celebrated mathematician threw aside a novel once in disgust, saying that "it proved nothing," but in these pages the author has endeavoured to prove much. Amidst the bustle and business, the joys and sorrows of life, she has attempted to illustrate how truly "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,"—how superior is the standard of Christian principle to the mere worldly code of honour or expediency, and how much of the happiness intended for man by his Creator is ruined and forfeited by the perversity of his own will, in neglecting the good of others, and in vainly grasping, like a spoiled

child, at more than is intended for his share. While thus writing a fiction, which may perhaps be denominated an enlarged religious tract in high life, the author humbly submits her pages to the judgment of others, and cannot conclude in the words of a more universally venerated, or of a more generally popular fictitious author than the excellent Bunyan:

> "Thus I set pen to paper with delight,
> And quickly had my thoughts in black and white;
> For having now my method by the end,
> Still as I pull'd it came, and so I penned
> It down, until at last it came to be,
> For length and breadth, the bigness which you see."



MODERN FLIRTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

I would advise a man to pause,
Before he take a wife;
Indeed I own I see no cause
He should not pause for life!

THE newspapers have recently adopted a strange habit of sometimes unexpectedly seizing an individual's name, long since retired from public notice, and gibbetting it up before the world's eye, when least anticipated, by volunteering a paragraph to announce, that some aged lord, or ex-minister, whom no one has remembered to think of for half a century or more, is residing on his estates, and enjoy-

ing, the editor is happy to understand, astonishing health, considering his advanced years. In observance of this custom, an exclamation of irritability and astonishment, too violent to be worthy of record, was elicited one day, from a dignified and very distinguished-looking old gentleman, with a venerable head, such as Titian might have painted, and a high lofty forehead bearing the traces of deep thought and feeling, when, after having seated himself on his favourite arm chair at the United Service Club in Edinburgh, his eye rested with a look of kindling amazement on these few lines, in large consequential-looking type, on a leading column of the Courant.

June 1829. "We are happy to inform our readers that the brave and noble veteran, once a distinguished hero in many a well-fought fight, Sir Arthur Dunbar, G.C.B., is yet alive, reposing on his well-earned laurels, at a retired mansion in the marine village of Portobello. Though frequently and most severely wounded in battle, besides being deprived of an arm in Lord Rodney's engagement during the year

'82, the Admiral's health continues unimpaired and his cheerfulness invariable, at the advanced age of 70."

"Pshaw! stuff and nonsense! Some enemy is resolved to make a laughing-stock of me in my old age!" exclaimed he, angrily pointing out the paragraph to his gay young relative, Louis de Crespigny, who was familiarly leaning over the high back of his chair; and then crumpling up the offending Courant with an obvious wish that it might be consumed in the flames—"I hope this is only the work of some wretched penny-a-liner; but if I even suspected that my conceited, good-looking scoundrel of a nephew had a hand in the jest, I would cut him off with a shilling,—or rather without one, for I could scarcely raise so much as a shilling to leave him, and he knows that. This is most thoroughly ridiculous! I, who have been dead, buried, and forgotten for years, to be made as conspicuous here, as a hair-dresser's wig-block! The editor shall be prosecuted,—horse-whipped,—or—or made as absurd as he has made me!"

"Why really, Admiral, I wish he had as much good to say of us all, and then the sooner he paragraphs about me the better!—'We are happy to inform our readers, that the agreeable and fascinating Cornet De Crespigny, of the 15th Light Hussars, now in his eighteenth year, is still alive!'—the public likes to know the exact age of distinguished men, such as you and I, Admiral!" ———

"The public is an ass!" replied Sir Arthur, breaking into a smile; "and perhaps I am another, to mind what is said at all, but that rascal of an editor has made me ten years older than I am; besides which, though a grey-haired admiral of sixty-four is not probably much addicted to blushing, he really has put my modest merit out of countenance. I would rather pay the newspapers any day for overlooking than for praising me. We ought to live or die for our country; but now, when I am no longer needed, let me stay in peace on the shelf, like," added he, giving a comic smile at his empty sleeve, "like a cracked tea-cup with the handle off!"

"But, Sir Arthur!" replied the young Cornet warmly, "you who never turned your back on friend or foe, are not very likely to remain quietly on the shelf, as long as every man who lives must respect you, and every man who dies continues to appoint you, as my father did, his executor, the trustee of his estates, and the guardian of his children, asking you to lend them a hand, as you have done to me in all the difficulties of life."

"I have but one hand to lend, and that is much at your service, in whatever way it can be useful! the other, though absent without leave, has been my own best friend, as the loss of that arm was the luckiest hit in the world. It obtained me a step at the time, and the pension has supported me ever since. What with my nephew's frantic extravagance, and my two young nieces being but indifferently provided for, I often wish, like every body else, for a larger income. Poor girls!" added Sir Arthur, knitting his bushy eye-brows into a portentous frown, which gave to his venerable countenance a look of noble and manly sor-

row. "No one can blame them! but it was little short of insanity in my brothor to leave such young children under the sole guardianship of a heartless spendthrift like your friend and my nephew Sir Patrick, who would sell his soul for sixpence."

"Yes! and squander it the next minute," added young De Crespigny, laughing. "I saw Pat produce a £20 note yesterday at Tait's auction-room, and a buzz of wonder ran all through the circle of his friends. Such a sight had not been seen in his pocket for many a day, and he threatened to put it up to auction, saying, he was sure we would all give double the value for it, as a rarity, considering the quarter from which it came. He really seems to pique himself on his poverty, and has the art of doing what another man would be cut for, with so much grace and apparent unconsciousness, that his friends really forget to disapprove.

"I never forget!" replied the Admiral, slowly rising and adjusting his spectacles. "I am even told the incorrigible rascal has mort-

gaged the legacy he pretends to expect from me! He would do anything short of a highway robbery for money, and has done some things that seem to a man of honour quite as bad. But," added Sir Arthur, growing more and more angry, "as long as he can give his friends a good bottle of claret, they ask no questions! Patrick Dunbar has caused me the only feeling of shame I ever had occasion for, and yet to see that proud snuff-the-moon look of his, you would suppose the world scarcely big enough to hold him! With his chin in the air, as I saw him yesterday, he will certainly knock his forehead some day against the sky!"

"You cannot wonder, Sir Arthur, that Dunbar is in immense favour with himself, when he is so admired, and almost idolized in society. He certainly has the handsomest countenance in Scotland;—as my uncle Doncaster says, Pat is a portrait by Vandyke, in his best style. With that grand, chivalrous, Chevalier-Bayard look, he is the best rider who ever sat on horseback! I could not but laugh when he mounted yesterday for a ride

along Princes Street, and turned to me, with his lively, victorious laugh, saying, 'Now I am going to give the ladies a treat!'"

"The insufferable coxcomb!" said Sir Arthur, relaxing into an irresistible smile of indulgent affection. "From the day he first came swaggering into this world to astonish us all, he has thought himself the finest sight between this and Whitehall!"

"Of course he does! Pat is asked for so many locks of his hair, by various young ladies, that his valet keeps a wig to supply them; and he might almost pay his debts with the countless collection he has received of sentimental rings, displaying forgotten forget-me-nots, in turquoises and gold! Who, on the wide earth, except yourself, Sir Arthur, would ever dream of finding fault with our gay, dashing, high-spirited friend, Dunbar, the life of society, the model of dress, equipage, and good living. Why! the very instant he opens his lips, all dulness vanishes like a spectre! I wish the whole world were peopled with such men; but he promises to shoot him-

self as soon as he sees his own equal. He staked his reputation one day that he would!"

"His reputation!! the sooner he parts with it the better! Let Patrick Dunbar exchange his own with the first man he meets in the street, and he will gain by the bargain."

"Pardon me, there, Sir Arthur, your nephew is universally allowed to be the best fellow upon earth!"

"Very probably! the 'best fellow upon earth' generally means a selfish, extravagant, scatter-brained roué; but I must be off! There is a cold, sharp, cutting wind, blowing in at the back of my neck, which makes me feel like Charles the First when the axe fell. If you have any influence, De Crespigny, with my scape-grace of a nephew—all nephews are scape-graces, as far as my experience goes—try to make him more like yourself, and I shall be grateful, with all my heart."

"Like me!!!" said the young Cornet, turning away with a smile; but it was a smile of bitterness, almost amounting to remorse, while he hastily grasped a newspaper, and flung

himself into a seat. "No! no! Sir Arthur, he is not quite so bad as that. Dunbar has his faults; he wears them upon his sleeve, and attempts no disguise; but there are many worse men in the world, who are held up as examples by those who know no better. Whenever I reform myself, you may depend upon my lecturing our friend, but not till then. We must both sow all our wild oats first."

"Yes! and endure the fruit of them afterwards," replied Sir Arthur, with a look of anxious kindness at his young relative. "That is the only crop where to sow is more agreeable than to reap! But I waste words! Young men will be young men, and I might as well ask this east wind not to blow, or try to turn the sea from its course, as attempt to stop the mad career of that scatter-brained madcap! It would matter less if he only fell himself hereafter, like a pebble in the stream; but the fatal eddy extends in a wide circle, which must reach the interests of those helpless young girls, my nieces; and I cannot but grieve over the consequences which may, and

must befall them, after I go to that rest which is in the grave, and to that hope which is beyond it."

"Never trouble your head about what shall occur then, Sir Arthur! 'Too much care once made an old man grey.' My motto is, '*apres moi le deluge!*' This little world of ours got on wonderfully well before we came into it, and will do astonishingly well again, after we make our exit," said young De Crespigny, with a strange medley in his tone, of melancholy thought, and contemptuous derision. "Pat tells me that both my young cousins promise to turn out a perfect blaze of beauty, with long shining ringlets that they almost tread upon in walking, teeth that would make the fortune of a dentist, and complexions that Rowland's kalydor could not improve. Ten years hence, I shall propose to one or both of them, myself, if that will give you satisfaction."

"Perfect! but as marrying two sisters at once is not quite customary, let your intentions be limited to Agnes. She is several years the eldest; and I like the good old pa-

triarchal rule of marrying by seniority; besides which, she is quite a little flirt already, though scarcely yet in her teens. She will be a young lady, entirely suited for the ordinary marrying and giving in marriage of every-day life; but little Marion is the very light of my eyes, and I must match her by a very high standard indeed. It will be a dark day for me, if I am ever obliged to part with her at all; and being now only in her sixth year, I may, without selfishness, hope to keep her beside me for my few remaining days. I must begin match-making for Agnes, however, directly, and your offer shall be duly considered. A future peer, with countless thousands in expectancy, and not particularly ill-looking, does not fall in our way every morning."

"So all the young ladies seem to think!" replied the young Cornet, in his most conceited tone. "Girls dislike nothing so much as to marry on a competence; there is a great deal of romance in marrying on nothing, and a great deal of comfort in marrying on wealth; but a mere vulgar competence has neither ro-

mance nor reality. Now I can offer both! First, actual starvation on a Cornet's pay; and then, with my uncle's leave, the pumpkin will turn to a carriage, and the mice into horses; but in the mean time, Sir Arthur, Pat tells me you keep a capital chop-house at Portobello, so pray invite me to drop in some day at six, to begin my siege of your pretty niece. I must come and see, before I can conquer," added Mr De Crespigny, in a tone of peculiar conceit, with which he always spoke either to ladies or of them. "Probably next week I may find my way to this *terra incognita* of yours. Is it across the Queensferry, or where?"

"My good friend! you are not so pre-eminently ignorant of geography as you would appear; for did I not see you honouring that dullest of all dull places, the little obscure village of Portobello, with your august presence, only yesterday. I nearly spitted you on the point of my umbrella, you hurried so rapidly past, evidently wishing to escape from that girl in a cloak, who seemed to beset your footsteps!"

"Impossible!!!" exclaimed young De Cres-

pigny, colouring violently, and starting from his seat. "Could it be in the nature of things that I should cut you!"

"True enough! I might have said, like Lady Towercliffe to Prince Meinkoff, '*vous m'avez coupé.*'"

"Indeed!" continued the cornet, trying to conceal his countenance. "I wish you had cut my throat in return!"

"If it is to be done, I would rather somebody else did! Why, De Crespigny! you will set the house on fire with that violent poker exercise! Your own face is on fire already! Have more regard for your complexion! Ah! now it is pale enough! Are you ill? My dear fellow! what is the matter?"

"Nothing! I am merely looking at the beautiful sun-set!"

"What! does the sun set in the east tonight?" asked Sir Arthur, jestingly; "that is worth looking at!"

"I am annoyed with a spasm of toothache!" said De Crespigny, putting a handkerchief to his face, which nearly covered it; and

then suddenly throwing open the window, he looked far out, as if in search of his groom. He leaned forward so long, however, that Sir Arthur kindly but vehemently remonstrated on the danger of exposing himself, while in so much pain, to the cold air; enumerated a whole host of remedies for decayed teeth; suggested the great comfort and convenience of having the offender extracted by Hutchins, and ended by hoping his young friend would still have a tooth left for his proposed dinner at Portobello.

"Depend upon me for that," replied Mr De Crespigny, with forced vivacity. "I shall ferret you out next week. I have little doubt your pasture is excellent in that quarter, and there is no one from whom I should be half so happy to receive a soup ticket."

"Keep your flattery for the ladies, where it will always be acceptable, and where I hear you are already an experienced practitioner in the arts of captivation. As for my dinner, I consider it an imposition to ask any friend, and not give him the best my cook and cellar

can furnish; and you may expect whenever you do come, to find a notice over my door, 'hot joints every day!'"

"But it was the society of your house, and not the dinner, to which my agreeable anticipations were directed; and there, you know, I cannot be disappointed! as somebody wisely said, when shewn a tempting bill of fare, 'shew me a bill of the company!'"

"That reminds me to say, you must not expect my pretty niece to be at my little bathing machine of a house! It would not be fair to inveigle you under such false pretences; but I promise you an old man's welcome, and the best that my cottage can produce; aged as this newspaper makes me, I enjoy every inch of life, and hope you, at the same age, will do the same. I may almost apply to my little villa that favourite saying in Spain,

> 'My home, my home! though thou 'rt but small,
> Thou art to me th' Escurial.'"

With a cordial shake of the hand, and a smile of cheerful benignity, Sir Arthur withdrew, and as his firm and stately step receded,

Mr De Crespigny watched him with a look of respectful interest, which ended in his turning away after the admiral had disappeared, and heaving a deep sigh, while a cloud of care darkened on his forehead, and a look of angry vexation shaded his previously animated eyes.

Day after day passed on, subsequent to the preceding conversation, during which Sir Arthur frequently postponed his chop, to what he considered an atrociously late hour, in hopes of his promised guest appearing. Once the admiral felt positively convinced that he had seen him enter a Portobello omnibus at four o'clock, but still he appeared not. Week after week elapsed, and still Sir Arthur ate his dinner alone, in long-surviving expectation, that either his own not very dutiful nephew, or young De Crespigny, would "cast up;" but at last these hopes and wishes were ended by his hearing that Sir Patrick's embarrassments had caused him to leave Edinburgh by moonlight, and that, soon after, Mr De Crespigny as suddenly departed, no one knew why, when, or wherefore.

CHAPTER II.

"The child is father of the man."
WORDSWORTH.

THE two most dashing, bold, and mischievous boys at Eton during their day, had formerly been Sir Patrick Dunbar and Louis de Crespigny, who astonished the weak minds of masters and pupils, by the strange and startling invention displayed in their exploits, as well as by the ingenuity with which both got safely out of every threatening predicament, and the sly humour or cunning with which they frequently shifted the disgrace, or even the punishment, of their offences, on others who deserved it less, or perhaps not at all. Invariably at the head of every mad exploit,

or at the bottom of every secret design, how they could possibly have escaped being expelled was a frequent topic of subsequent wonder among their contemporaries in the classes; but their delight was to run as near the wind as possible, and still to display their skilful pilotage by baffling justice, and evading the utmost rigour of the law, while always ready rather to do harm than to do nothing.

When very young, the two enterprising friends, both since gazetted into the 15th Light Huzzars, had shewn an early predilection for military life, by frequently escaping to the neighbouring barracks, assisted by a ladder or rope on which they descended every night from the windows. A gay joyous reception invariably awaited these lively boys at the mess-table, where they sung many a jovial song, and cracked many a merry jest over their claret, till, after some hours spent in rapturous festivity, they stole silently back within bounds, and were re-admitted at the window, by their respective fags, who had received orders, under pain of death, to keep

awake and answer their signals for the ladder by instantly lowering it. The spirits of both these young companions were more like the effect of intoxication, than mere sober enjoyment; and, on one occasion, they set the table in a roar, by having a rivalship which would best imitate the gradual progress of becoming tipsy, though drinking nothing but cold water; in which exhibition they showed so much talent for mimicry, taking off the surrounding officers before their faces, and making so many home-thrusts and personal remarks, that the scene was never afterwards forgotten in the regiment. On another occasion Sir Patrick caused himself to be placed in a coffin, stolen from the undertakers, and was carried through the barracks by his companions, who made paper trumpets with which they played the dead march in Saul, while all the sentries saluted as they passed. Such juvenile exploits in the dawn of life were now the subject of many a laughing reminiscence, and had been followed by others on a more extended scale and of more matured enter-

prise, at Mr. Brownlow's, a private tutor, where the two young men afterwards distinguished themselves in a way not easily to be forgotten, causing their better disciplined companions to wonder, though in very few instances to admire.

In the favourite aristocratic achievements of driving stage coaches, breaking lamps, wringing off knockers, assaulting watchmen, with other fistic and pugilistic exploits, they were nearly unrivalled; and occasionally their genius had soared into an extraordinary display of dexterity, in transposing the signs suspended over shops, and in filching silk handkerchiefs from the pockets of their friends, merely as amateurs, but still the deed was done, and the laugh raised literally at the expense of the sufferer, as the plunder was retained to be a future trophy of success. Each successive stage of their youth, in short, supplied an inexhaustible fund of standing jests and lively anecdotes, the wit of which mainly consisted in their mischief, while they betrayed an utter recklessness about the opinions or

the feelings of others, till at length the patience of their unfortunate private tutor was so completely exhausted that he gave them a secret hint to withdraw, which they accordingly lost no time in preparing to do, but not till they had enjoyed a very characteristic revenge. When Mr Brownlow had taken a party of friends with him one evening to the theatre, Sir Patrick suddenly discharged from the gallery the whole contents of a prodigious bag of flour, which powdered all the heads, faces, and coats, in the pit, perfectly white, and caused an uproar of anger and of irresistible laughter throughout the house; and the same evening Louis de Crespigny, as a farewell frolic, abstracted a stuffed bear from the neighbouring hair-dresser's, and having equipped it in the costume of Mr Brownlow, hung it from the lamp-post, where a panic-struck crowd was speedily assembled by the alarming report that the reverend gentleman had committed suicide. A strict investigation took place respecting the authors of these unpardonable tricks, but, though suspicion fell at once upon

the real culprits, and the circumstantial evidence against them seemed irresistibly strong, Sir Patrick argued his own cause with so much skill and vivacity, while De Crespigny looked so innocently unconscious of the whole affair, that, with a silent frown from the master, of stern reproof and suspicion, they were, not honourably acquitted, but allowed to return home without any public mark of censure or disgrace; and soon after both joined their regiment at Dublin.

De Crespigny and Sir Patrick had but one companion whom they acknowledged as their equal at Eton, in all the spirit, enterprise, and vivacity of their characters, but who was, in a thousand other respects, their superior, for seldom, indeed, has there been known, in one so young, a character of as much intensity, or which displayed a combination so singular, of superb talents, rare judgment, sound principle, deep piety, and energetic feeling, as in Richard Granville, an object of admiration to all, and of envy to many; though jealousy lost half of its bitterness in asso-

ciation with one so eloquent and single-hearted in conversation, so courteously amiable and conciliatory in manner, and with so fine a principle of tact, ready as far as possible to enhance the pleasures, to palliate the faults, and to share the sorrows of all his companions. Cultivated in all that could adorn the heart, as well as the head, in whatever was amiable, high-spirited, and generous, Richard Granville had but to follow the impulse of natural feeling as well as of principle, and he out-did the very wishes of his friends, while no one excelled him in all the manly exercises suited to his early years. His countenance was illuminated with an expression of intellectual energy, at times almost sublime, while there was a living grace and amiability in his manner irresistibly attractive. Brave, liberal, and resolute, he entered with eagerness into all the inoffensive recreations of his companions, and no one excelled him in riding, fencing, and cricket, while he was the best shot in his own county; but he firmly declined ever to squander his time or money on

any games of chance, cards, billiards, or gambling in any form. While Sir Patrick's betting-book was from the first a model of skill, in hedging bets, and all the manœuvres of jockey-ology, young Granville said all that eloquence and affection could dictate, to point out how dangerous and dishonourable was the course on which he seemed about to enter, but in vain, for Sir Patrick finished the discussion by offering to bet him L.5 he would not be ruined in less than ten years. "I have a fortune and constitution which will last me till thirty," said the young baronet; "and I do not wish to live a day longer."

"It is easy," said Prince Eugene, "to be modest when one is successful, but it is difficult not to be envied." While the very presence of young Granville in the room with his riotous young associates, seemed as if it held up a glass to their mind's eye, testifying the folly and evil of their course, yet Richard Granville abhorred display, while Sir Patrick and De Crespigny frequently declared he was "too clever and too good for them;" and unavoid-

able circumstances afterwards combined to estrange the young men still more. A law-suit had been going on almost since the period of their birth, conducted in an amicable way by their guardians, in which the interests of all three were so deeply concerned, and the case so exceedingly complicated, that years passed on, during which the youths had all grown to manhood, and the case remained still undecided; while the one-sided view which was given to Dunbar and De Crespigny on the subject caused in them an angry feeling of rancour and hostility against their amiable and high-minded young relative, who was so enthusiastically desirous to enter the English church, and devote himself to those sacred duties, that he scarcely wished a favourable decree, which would prevent the necessity for his pursuing a profession at all.

A Scotch law-suit may be compared to a game at battle-dore between the tribunals of England and Scotland, while the gaping client sees the shuttle-cock for ever flying over his head, higher and higher out of reach,

and sent backwards and forwards with ceaseless diligence, but no apparent progress; or it is like a kitten playing with a ball of worsted, which is allowed to come often apparently within her grasp, and is then, when she least expects, twitched away farther than before. The Granville case had been decided by the Court of Session, against the two cousins, Dunbar and De Crespigny, but being appealed to the House of Lords, was recommended for consideration, re-argued, re-considered, and nearly reversed, while replies and duplies, remits and re-revisals, commissions of inquiry, and new cases, followed each other in ceaseless succession, and many of the lawyers who were young men when the case began, grew grey in the service, while yet it remained in suspense. A grand-uncle of Sir Patrick's had fifty years before bought an estate of L.12,000 a-year from the Marquis of Doncaster, to whom young De Crespigny was now heir-presumptive; but Mr Dunbar having, it was conjectured, entertained some suspicion that the title-deeds were not perfectly valid,

as an entail had been discovered afterwards, by which it was generally thought that the land must be restored to the original owner, he hastily and most unfairly sold the property to the late Mr Granville for L.350,000, and dying intestate, after having lost nearly the whole sum in a mining speculation, it could not be proved whether Sir Patrick's father had acted as executor for the deceased or not, so as to render himself responsible for his debts, and liable to refund the sum paid by Mr Granville. Thus, whether the entail held good, and carried the estate back to Lord Doncaster, or whether it had been legally broken, so as to entitle the Granville family to keep it, or whether, if it were refunded, the price could be claimed from the heirs of Mr Dunbar, still continued a mystery never apparently to be solved.

For many generations past, the ancient Marquisate of Doncaster had been inherited by a succession of only sons, all strict Papists, who had each in his turn been reckoned by the next heirs exceedingly sickly and unpro-

mising, but still the wonder grew, for not one had ever died, till he left a substitute in regular rotation, to supply the vacancy which he created himself; and a long train of minorities in the family had caused the accumulation of wealth and property to be enormous, when the present proprietor succeeded, fifty years before our story commences. Nothing could exceed his own astonishment at the unembarrassed magnificence of the fortune, of which he most unexpectedly found himself in possession, as his father had been in the habit of concealing the amount of his own income, and allowing his heir rather less than nothing, saying, that as he himself never had anything to eat till he had no teeth to eat with, he was resolved that his successor should be similarly treated. In pursuance of this plan, the old nobleman even on his death-bed, had actually expired with a practical joke on his lips. He sent for his son, gravely told him that with debts, mortgages, and settlements, the very encumbered estate he was about to inherit would scarcely pay its own expenses, and re-

commended him to live in future with the most penurious economy. When the will was opened, finding to his unutterable joy, that he had merely been played upon by the old humorist, who in reality left him L.40,000 per annum clear, so great was Lord Doncaster's surprise, that he declared his good fortune at the time to be "almost incredible;" and it might have been supposed, that he never afterwards completely believed it, as his personal expenses were always in a style more suited to the old Lord's threat than his performance, and he became a fresh instance of what may be so often remarked, that the most extravagant heirs in expectancy become the most avaricious in possession.

There was one singular peculiarity in the settlements of Lord Doncaster's family, that so long as he had no son, or if his son at twenty-one declared himself a Protestant, he had the power of selling or bequeathing the estates according to his own pleasure or caprice; and the ancestor who had inserted this clause in his deed of entail, made his intention

evident, that the succession should go to the Roman Catholic Church, rather than to a Protestant heir; but the present peer had taken advantage, on so large a scale, of his own childless privilege, to sell the family estates, that his two deceased sisters, Lady Charlotte De Crespigny, and Lady Caroline Smytheson, used secretly to complain, that little would be left for their children, if he persevered in turning every acre into gold; yet no one ever could guess how the large sums were squandered or melted away, which the old Marquis was continually raising, unless they went, as was strongly suspected, in the form of "secret service money," among the priests by whom he was surrounded.

Nobody had a better right to be eccentric than Lord Doncaster!—old, rich, unmarried, and originally educated at home,—a misfortune sufficient in itself to engender so many peculiarities, as to render a man unfit for society ever afterwards. The aged peer was shy, proud, and arbitrary beyond all conception, avaricious about trifles, yet lavish to

excess on great occasions, suspicious of all men's motives and intentions, and yet confiding to the last extreme of weakness, in the Abbé Mordaunt, his confessor, despising all men, and yet anxious beyond measure for the world's good opinion, addicted to the very worst female society, when he might have enjoyed the best, hating company, and yet sometimes plunging into it, when and where he was least expected, jealous to excess of his next heir, Louis De Crespigny, whom he enslaved to his caprices, as if even his existence were to be given or withheld at his option, yet sometimes whimsically cordial in his manner to him, though ready to take fire in an instant if his condescension led the lively youth into the slightest approach towards confidence or familiarity.

Mr Howard Smytheson, the wealthy brother-in-law of Lord Doncaster, having purchased most of the De Crespigny estates, as acre after acre, farm after farm, and house after house, came successively into the market, bequeathed them on his decease to an

only daughter then an infant, and it became a favourite day-dream with the old peer, that his nephew and niece should be educated for each other, while to this end he tried his utmost power of conciliation with the maiden sister of Mr Howard Smytheson, to whose care the young heiress had been consigned, hoping that thus all the amputated limbs of his vast property might yet be reunited in their pristine magnitude, to which very desirable end he thenceforth directed his whole conversations with young De Crespigny, to whom he more than hinted that, unless their will were the same about this marriage, his own will after death would be found very different from what his nephew probably anticipated and wished.

The private vices of Lord Doncaster had been so very private, that though much was suspected, little could be known; yet, while he had few visible or personal expenses, and no imaginable outlet for his fortune, he invariably spent all his income, and considerably more, being one of those personages occasionally seen

who excite the wonder and speculation of relations and neighbours, by unaccountably frittering away fortunes of almost royal splendour, without any appearance of royal luxury or royal liberality. Wearied of the world, in which he had nothing more to desire, and of himself, as he had nothing to think of or to do,—bored in short with the want of a want, Lord Doncaster's life was indeed a mere heartless pageant of mean ostentation and fretful pride, sternly insulated in a state of solitary old-bachelor despotism, and absorbed in himself to a degree which no ordinary mind could conceive or comprehend. Encumbered with so many unoccupied hours, it was a subject of as much wonder how he disposed of his superfluous time, as of his superfluous fortune; but he settled that question, by remarking one day to his nephew, that "the great business of life is, to shuffle through the day anyhow till dinner time." Like all parsimonious men, Lord Doncaster could not endure to hear any one else reckoned affluent, and Louis De Crespigny knew that a certain receipt for irritating him

was, to over-estimate everybody's income, consequently he amused himself occasionally by audibly giving out Lord Towercliffe's fortune to be L.15,000 a-year, and estimating his friend Sir Patrick Dunbar's rent-roll at a clear sum of L.20,000 per annum, while he slyly watched his uncle's rising choler, and patiently heard, for the fiftieth time, an elaborate explanation, that it was impossible, and a sober calculation, which reduced both the offending parties almost to beggary.

In the month of August, as regularly as time revolved, Lord Doncaster delighted to read in the newspapers, his own pompous advertisement, the only original composition he was ever known to attempt, in which he prohibited poachers and strangers from shooting on his moors in Argyleshire, Mid-Lothian, Yorkshire, Galloway, Cromarty, and Caithness, but except the annual appearance of this spirited manifesto, no public evidence ever came forth of that extraordinary wealth which property so extensive must be supposed to produce. No charitable donations bore witness to Lord Don-

caster's liberality,—no country objects were encouraged by his public spirit,—and the monuments daily arising in memory of departed merit, made a vain appeal for his pecuniary tribute of respect and regret, for Lord Doncaster neither respected nor regretted any man.

It was an often-repeated axiom of Lord Doncaster's, that every man cheats or is cheated; but in one instance, and one only, his Lordship had shown apparently some kind feeling, or rather perhaps he might be said to have exhibited a capricious freak of benevolence, though the result had been such as to afford him an excuse ever afterwards for not again attempting a single act of gratuitous liberality.

The nearest relative to his ancient family, after Louis De Crespigny and Miss Howard, was Mrs Anstruther, a distant cousin, who, after making a low and almost disgraceful marriage, had suddenly died, it was believed by her own hands, thus consigning her two young children to helpless, and apparently hopeless poverty, till at length they were very unwillingly invited, or rather permitted to become residents in an

almost menial capacity at Beaujolie Castle, in Yorkshire, where, as they could neither be drowned like kittens, nor shot like puppy-dogs, the Marquis caused them to be treated like the "whipping boys" in Charles the First's time,—sometimes employed as playmates to amuse his nephew and niece during their holiday visits to his residence, but more frequently treated in a sort of mongrel-way between dependents and slaves by the heartless and tyrannical old peer, who considered them as mere poachers on the preserve of his family honours, having forced their way into existence by some untoward accident, and become absolute blots in the creation, liable to be suspected, and even accused to their faces of every low and vicious propensity, in consequence of which, from an early age, he destroyed their self-respect, and irritated their evil passions by the most rash and unfounded aspersions,—theft, swindling, lying, and gluttony, were among the principal counts in his Lordship's indictment, when he sometimes vented a paroxysm of ill-humour on these his

unhappy dependents; and many a time the tears of Mary Anstruther, and the flashing eye of her brother Ernest, bore witness to the anger and grief with which they listened to his bitter and often unmerited upbraidings.

At times, however, Lord Doncaster found it convenient for his own private purposes to patronize the Anstruthers, and threatened, in the hearing of all his young relatives, that if Louis De Crespigny's conduct did not in all respects satisfy him, an heir more subservient to his wishes might be found, and though the culprit must be his nephew, he need not be his successor, while the glance of his eye towards Ernest aroused hopes, wishes, and even expectations of the wildest extravagance, which were then confirmed for a time by his being promoted to temporary attention and consideration, not only displayed ostentatiously by their capricious patron, but extending to the increased respect and observance of the servants, the thermometer of whose obedience rose and fell according as the sunshine of Lord Doncaster's favour shone upon his young relative or not;

yet brief as these periods of increased importance had always been, they made an indelible impression on the young and ambitious minds of those usually neglected children. "The child becomes a boy, the boy a youth, and then the game of life begins in earnest."

Without education or principle, and with no friend on the wide earth to confide in or to consult, the two young Anstruthers, like weeds that will yet flourish though trampled upon, grew up vigorous in body, and enthusiastically as well as devotedly attached to each other, with a depth and power of affection which appeared, before long, the only redeeming quality in characters wherein strong passions and weak principles promised little, and threatened much, to all with whom they might hereafter become associated.

The resemblance between them was as remarkable as their attachment, both having dark Italian-looking countenances, of remarkable symmetry, with a singularly excitable and determined expression in their large lustrous eyes, while it was remarkable that neither

could by possibility look any one steadily in the face. There was a wild, almost feverish brillancy in the eye of Ernest, expressive of a fiery impetuosity, amounting at times almost to an appearance of insanity, when, after being obliged to crouch and flatter for his bread before Lord Doncaster, he would retire with Mary, and give loose to all the angry torrent of his long-suppressed emotions. The sister's heart cowered sometimes before the flood of invectives and imprecations with which he relieved his heart by speaking of his wrongs, while he seemed to cherish a gnawing belief that fortune herself had shown him a most unaccountable and undeserved enmity, which he was resolved, by fair or by foul means, to subvert. "I shall yet rise above all the accidents of fortune! It shall be done, I care not how, Mary," said he sternly. "We must not be over-particular on that score, for, as the proverb says, 'a cat in mittens will never catch mice!'"

Bold, fearless, and ready, with a keen appetite for danger, a fearless ambition, consummate

cunning, and an insatiable thirst for adventure, it seemed sometimes as if he would put his mind into a pugilistic attitude, and buffet his way forward to pre-eminence in spite of all the malice of fortune and of mankind. With a temper vindictive, harsh, and deadly, his blood mounted like mercury in a thermometer at the very thought of success, and often when he spoke to his sister in the lowest whisper of their future prospects, she would start and look hastily round as if in terror, lest the wild dreams of his undisciplined mind might be overheard and resented, for he nourished a feverish hope, which he called a presentiment, but which amounted almost to a *mono-mania*, that the splendid residence in which they were now only tolerated on sufferance, "as reptile dependents," would one day become his own.

If every man living might remove at pleasure all those who stand inconveniently in his way, political economists would have nothing to fear from a too rapidly increasing population, and the day-dreams of Ernest, which gained strength and consistency every hour,

were prolific in both deaths and marriages. He carefully collected in the Peerage all the instances there recorded, in which distant relations had succeeded through a long mortality of twenty or five-and-twenty intermediate heirs,—he remembered that neither Louis nor Caroline had yet endured the measles,—he thought their Shetland ponies very dangerous, and, in short, if their days had been measured by him, the measure would have been short indeed. His personal vanity was excessive, and amidst his wild schemes of aggrandisement, the first and foremost had lately been to marry his lively, frolicsome, little cousin, and occasional play-mate, Caroline Howard Smytheson, in whose infant manner, heedless and good-humoured as she was, he flattered himself there might be traced an evident appearance of preference, while he could not but also remark, that before any of the young party had attained the age of maturity, and Caroline was yet a mere infant, Louis De Crespigny had already begun to exercise his genius for flirtation in the society of his hum-

ble cousin Mary Anstruther,—humble only in circumstances, but possessing that pride without principle, which goes before a fall.

Time had ripened the faults of the two young Anstruthers, and perfected also their extraordinary beauty of person, when, after Ernest had attained the age of nineteen, a whim as sudden, and apparently as unaccountable as their adoption, caused Lord Doncaster, or rather the Abbé Mordaunt, unexpectedly to announce that they were dismissed from the house. Various rumours were circulated among the servants to account for this harsh and hasty decision, but nothing could be discovered for certain. Ernest was reported to have expressed himself with the greatest rancour and contempt respecting a report in circulation, that Lord Doncaster intended to marry the Abbé Mordaunt's beautiful niece, then on a visit at Kilmarnock Abbey, near Edinburgh. The Abbé was said to have missed some valuable jewels belonging to his niece Laura, who accused both the Anstruthers of having been seen in her room,—a large sum of

money, it was hinted, had mysteriously disappeared—some people said that Ernest had been discovered at a late hour of the night attempting to enter the sleeping apartment of Lord Doncaster, without being able to give any satisfactory account of his intentions, and others declared that Louis De Crespigny's assiduities to Mary Anstruther had recently become rather too obvious, while surmises arose against her character; but whatever might be the cause, they were both hastily transferred on a few hours' notice from the splendours of Kilmarnock Abbey, to a small obscure lodging at Portobello. As Ernest was about to leave that house which had so long been his home, with Mary sobbing in uncontrollable grief on his arm, anger and despair were fearfully stamped on their young faces, when the Abbé Mordaunt advancing silently, placed a small sum of money in their hands, which the young man furiously dashed upon the ground, and trampled upon, saying in accents of strong and almost terrifying vehemence, while his countenance exhibited a dark insidious expression of

almost maniacal fury, "I would not be human if I did not hate your niece and you!—my curse shall rest on both till I am revenged! Take back your paltry gold, I shall build up my own fortune, or perish in the ruins! I shall live by my own hands, or, —— by my own hands I shall die!"

From that day forward the names of Mary and Ernest Anstruther never passed the lips of Lord Doncaster or the Abbé, who ordered the servants also to abstain from ever mentioning them, which only piqued the curiosity of the second table into greater activity than ever; but though many vague conjectures, dark suspicions, and absurd rumours, were promulgated throughout the establishment, nothing certain could be ascertained, except that they returned no more to Kilmarnock Abbey, and that a final extinguisher had been placed on all their prospects and hopes from Lord Doncaster.

About this time Mrs Bridget Smytheson sent Miss Howard, then only six years old, to school, and seemed so little anxious to encou-

rage an intimacy between the young heiress and Louis de Crespigny, whom she had long disliked, that Lord Doncaster, piqued and indignant, angrily reminded her of his sister Lady Caroline's dying injunction, to which she had promised implicit attention, that if the cousins, after they were grown up, could be ascertained to have a disinterested preference for each other, every opportunity should be given them to become attached and engaged.

"Certainly, Lord Doncaster; and I shall fulfil my pledge," replied the over-dressed, and rather under-bred aunt, in her usual tone of fantastic affectation; "but these boy-and-girl intimacies are not the most likely to produce that romantic love with which young people ought to begin their married lives; and besides, how could their preference be disinterested, where the brilliant prospects of both are continually descanted on as motives to their union. No! I have a considerable spice of romance in my composition; and when they do meet again, it shall be under very different circumstances."

"What a creature to have the charge of any girl!" thought Lord Doncaster, as he returned from handing her, with every appearance of profound respect, into her poney-carriage. "There is not another woman half so insane out of bedlam; and that mad-cap child herself is as wild as a horse with the reins broke. The greatest annoyance on earth is, to have rich and vulgar upstarts among one's near connections"

CHAPTER III.

The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love I cannot share.—BYRON.

THE life of Louis De Crespigny, from the hour he entered the army, was one continued steeple-chase after pleasure and amusements in whatever form they could be courted, or at whatever expense they could be enjoyed. At a very early age, he was already a veteran in the world and its ways; for he stood "alone in his glory," the most admired, courted, and idolized of mankind, a perfect adept in all the arts of rendering himself agreeable in society, and possessing many pleasant qualities, but none that were valuable. During a gay career of dissipation and frivolity, he had entered

with successive eagerness on a thousand flirtations, though he always forgot to marry in the end, while his heart, like a phœnix, was frequently consumed, yet never destroyed, and always ready at the service of any young lady, with youth, beauty, and accomplishments enough to excite his temporary interest. Being of opinion, that, though not yet a peer, he ought speedily to be one, young De Crespigny openly avowed the impossibility of marrying while Lord Doncaster survived, and jocularly remarked, that it would be a pity prematurely to cut off the hopes of his hundred and one Scotch cousins, who lived, like Ernest Anstruther, on the hope, that if his neck were broken at Melton, his succession might yet be "cut up" amongst them; and to the friendly inquiries of his many relatives, he frequently replied with a condoling look, that he and his uncle were both "hopelessly well."

Lord Doncaster was not even yet, by any means, so great a Methusalemite in age, nor so weighed down with infirmities, as his lively

nephew chose among the mothers and daughters of his intimate acquaintance to represent; and some ladies whom young De Crespigny had piqued or affronted, were actually ill-natured enough to hint, that Lord Doncaster was still almost young and almost handsome! They had even been so malicious as to insinuate, that his Lordship might possibly have a genius for marrying his housekeeper, almost the only respectable female who ever crossed his threshold; but Mrs Frieland's very mature age, and very antiquated dress, shewed how completely she must have given up that point; and even her desire to please him in her own department, became every hour so increasingly difficult, and was attended with failures and disappointments so unforeseen and unaccountable, that the good woman often shook her head ominously, in alluding to his Lordship's numerous whims, saying, in a confidential under tone, which seemed to mean more than met the ear, to the steward, "he's petiklar! he's very petiklar! It would require

a person bespoke to order to please his Lordship." And certainly he had become of late years more particular than ever.

One personage only seemed to have the art of doing no wrong in the estimation of Lord Doncaster; and the respect which he withheld from all mankind, was concentrated to an immeasurable degree on the Abbé Mordaunt, who was the Cardinal Wolsey of Kilmarnock Abbey and Beaujolie Castle. Proud, overbearing, harsh, and arbitrary, he ruled over the house, the purse, and even the will of his patron, with despotic and unlimited sway. Men are generally advanced in years before the passions and feelings have stamped their indelible traces, like the impression of a seal, which becomes permanent only after the wax has begun to cool; but in every feature of the Abbé's countenance, might now be seen the evidences of a gloomy, severe, and almost ferocious temper, yet never was there a greater triumph of art over nature, than in the skill with which he adapted his looks and conversation to the taste or caprice of those whom it

was his interest to govern, and the astonishing facility with which he could call up a bland smile and insinuating voice, to supersede the habitual haughtiness of his tone and manner.

Educated at St Omers, in all the dark superstitions of that bigoted college, the Abbé was nevertheless far from desiring to seek within the walls of a cloister any protection from those temptations to worldly indulgence, which he had not even a wish to resist. He neither preached nor practised the virtues of his vocation, but paraded a whole troop of vices openly in the public eye; and far from seeking to reform mankind, he never attempted even to reform himself. Though in personal appearance of distinguished ugliness, yet such was the magic of his manner, that even by ladies he was considered perfectly irresistible; and to all, whether old or young, he generally succeeded in imparting a conviction, that he saw in her, for the first time, a realization of female perfection and female fascination. The Abbé was never known to stop half-way in arduously pursuing any object of

pleasure, profit, or ambition, nor, whatever might be the impediments, was he ever seen to fail of success; for, like Bonaparte, he did not know the meaning of the word "impossible."

After having recklessly squandered, in a career of almost startling dissipation, the whole of his own patrimony, it was believed that he had obtained fraudulent possession of £10,000 belonging to his very beautiful niece, to whom he must have refunded it had she lived to come of age, or had she married it must have been restored to her children, but about the time our story commences, she was supposed either to have died, or to have retired to a convent abroad, though whether upon conviction or not, might be considered very doubtful, as she had been educated by her mother in the Protestant faith, and it was generally conjectured that to so sudden and entire a removal from all former connections, her poverty more than her will must have consented. Laura Mordaunt had resided much at Kilmarnock Abbey with her uncle, to whom she seemed warmly

and blindly attached, but the gossiping world sometimes conjectured that perhaps the evident partiality and admiration of Lord Doncaster might have roused in her some ambitious thoughts, backed by the influence of the Abbé. Among the peculiarities of the Marquis he had always professed a decided contempt for all respectable ladies, and therefore his attentions to Laura Mordaunt were at best a very questionable compliment, and became latterly of a nature which few relatives would have wished to encourage, yet Miss Mordaunt still remained a guest at Kilmarnock Abbey, till the period of her sudden disappearance, which caused so much astonishment among her intimate friends and near connections, that the father of Richard Granville, her cousin, shortly before his own death, wrote an affectionate letter, entreating her to return, were it but for a few months, and to make a home of his house for the future, should it suit her to do so; but to this kind and generous offer no reply ever came, and as all communications were to pass through the Abbé's hands, who alone knew

his niece's direction, it might be doubted whether the invitation ever reached that hand for which it was intended.

That Lord Doncaster had cruelly disappointed Laura Mordaunt, as he had already disappointed many others, her friend and cousin had good reason to believe; and though unable to imagine any really romantic or lasting attachment to a man, however elevated in rank or agreeable in manners, of at least fifty years old, yet he knew that Laura, who lived so retired that she could boast of few friends and no admirers, might really have been dazzled with the splendour of his rank or the fascination of his conversation; while it seemed the most unaccountable part of the whole affair, that if such were the case, the attachment had not been reciprocal, between a young and beautiful girl, thrown so continually in his way, and an aged roué, who had so evidently admired her.

If the probable duration of Lord Doncaster's life had been measured according to the estimate formed of it in many an Edinburgh drawing-room, it would have brought a very

small premium indeed at the insurance offices. By referring to that valuable record, Debrett's peerage, it was satisfactorily proved that the De Crespignys were a very short-lived family! One Lord Doncaster had died of a fall from his horse at thirty-five; another had been killed in battle, at forty-two; and not one of them had contrived very much to exceed eighty, therefore hopes might be entertained of the popular and fascinating Louis de Crespigny at last gaining the long-expected "step." It might have been supposed by strangers in Edinburgh, that there was but one marquisate in Britain, so frequently were the strawberry leaves of Lord Doncaster under animated discussion; and any visitor who accidentally took Burke or Debrett in his hand, might smile to observe that the pages naturally fell open where that interesting paragraph presented itself to notice,

"Doncaster, Marquis of. Heir presumptive, Louis Henry De Crespigny."

A tradition prevailed among the elder ladies of fashion now in society, that a splendid set

of diamonds, which had been long the ornament and admiration of Queen Charlotte's drawing-rooms, were since entailed, by an old Lady Doncaster, in the family; and many a young beauty, in arranging a bright futurity on her own plan, had frequently worn these far-famed jewels in her imagination, when presented at Court as a Marchioness, the envy and admiration of all her contemporaries. Meantime nothing could be more astonishing than to find how much was known in Edinburgh concerning the modes of life, temper, and character of the present Lord Doncaster, though he lived not only secluded from society, but made it his peculiar study to evade the scrutiny of impertinent curiosity, and was so anxious to check the loquaciousness of servants, that his butler and housekeeper had strict orders to keep up a sort of prison discipline in the establishment, and not allow a word to be spoken when at meals. It was, however, authentically ascertained by some unknown means, that Lord Doncaster, who had formerly been a man of dissipated habits and irregular

hours, now devoted himself to the care of his health as diligently and intensely as a miser does to the care of his money, and that to him it had become a subject of almost avaricious interest. If the Marquis had a finger-ache, it was magnified in Edinburgh into a case of certain death; but after a really severe illness, he was heard jocularly to remark, in sporting phrase, "I have had another round with death!" while he seemed confident, on these occasions, of always coming off victorious, though few among the young ladies of his nephew's acquaintance would have been found ready to back his expectations, while Agnes Dunbar impatiently remarked, that Lord Doncaster had been so long in the world, he seemed not to know how to leave it.

It was generally understood by the juries who sat upon Lord Doncaster's case in society, that his breakfast consisted of strong gravy soup and poached eggs, which were pronounced to be very plethoric,—he ate no luncheon, which must be very exhausting at his time of life,—he had an enormous appetite for din-

ner, which would certainly drive blood to his head,—and above all, he took a hot supper, which must be fatal at last;—every newspaper tends to prove, that after eating a hearty supper the night before, people are invariably found dead in their beds the next morning;—and it was already unaccountable how many mornings Lord Doncaster had survived! Any day in the world might bring accounts of his death,—some day must do so, sooner or later,—hundreds of old people were dying continually, and so might the superannuated peer; yet though his days were numbered in so many houses, they nevertheless seemed to be numberless, while gentlemen, older than himself, were often heard impatiently speculating and wondering what will he would make, and declaring they only wished to live, in order to know the result of so many anxious conjectures, while his dutiful nephew gayly remarked, that his uncle need never wait for parchment to write his will upon, while the skin on his face looked so like it.

Still Lord Doncaster obstinately persevered

in living on, while, strange to say, many of the manœuvring mamas who had been heard to declare, that if an old person must die at any rate, they could spare his Lordship better than any other mortal, became mortal themselves, and were first consigned to the tomb. Even some of the young and lovely girls, who had thought, in the morning of life, before the freshness of their bloom had been dimmed, or the lustre of their beauty had decayed, that this one obstacle to their happiness must be removed,—many of these gay, joyous, and unthinking beings had sunk unexpectedly into an early grave, while still Lord Doncaster, in a most provoking and unprincipled manner, disappointed everybody, and continued to exist in a world where he was anything but welcome, resolved apparently, never, in an every-day vulgar way, to die at all.

In the mean time, Louis De Crespigny, devoted to the amusements of life, but independent of all its finer sympathies, seemed to breathe nothing but the exhilarating ether of life, joyous, giddy, and intoxicating. He re-

veiled in a laughing, lively, satirical consciousness of his own exact position in society, and privately resolved to make the most of it,—not that he deliberately made up his mind to deceive,—his code of honour was rigid enough in respect to his transactions with gentlemen, but in the case of young ladies it was otherwise,—

"——— Man, to man so oft unjust,
Is always so to woman."

With ladies Mr De Crespigny considered his own brilliant prospects and personal fascinations to be fair, marketable produce, which there could be no objection that he should use to the utmost advantage, for bringing in the largest possible return of pleasure, profit, and amusement. Accordingly, the gay young Cornet, living upon what he could borrow, on the disinterested attentions of manœuvring mothers, and on the expectation of his uncle's speedy demise, made himself the chosen attendant of half a hundred accomplished and perfectly amiable young ladies, who laughed, talked, sang, and danced with him, while he soon became but too intimately known as a

ruthless flirt, to many a young heart, and to many a happy home, where he took care that it should be distinctly implied and understood, that nothing but the jealous penuriousness of "that old quiz, Lord Doncaster," impeded his ardent wish to settle for life; while in the mean time, wherever a good table and cellar were kept, he testified exactly such a degree of partiality for the sister or daughter of his host, as made her be considered his wife-presumptive, and secured him a regular knife and fork in the house on all family festivals and state occasions, without any trouble in either ordering or paying for the entertainment. It has been said, that as a rolling stone gathers no moss, neither does a roving heart gain any affection; but whatever might be the case with others, Louis De Crespigny felt himself without a doubt the idol of every drawing-room, where he sentimentalized, rattled, and flirted in every style, with every girl under twenty, as diligently as if he were canvassing for an election, while they talked, looked, smiled, and dressed their very best; and the

excellence of any gentleman's wine might be accurately estimated by the thermometer of Mr De Crespigny's attention to the daughters; but he had a declared abhorrence of family dinners, which looked too business-like and domestic, as if he had really committed himself; though, as Lady Towercliffe remarked to her four daughters one day, "he never said anything to the purpose, when the purpose was marriage."

Though Mr De Crespigny seemed, at the "dignity dinners" in Edinburgh, to live for no other object on earth, but the one fascinating young lady, with whom it was his game at the time to appear *epris*, and though she might probably be astonished and piqued during the following week, to observe this indefatigable amateur in flirtations equally assiduous in his attentions to another, and shooting like a brilliant meteor in the ball-room, unheedingly past herself, yet she might console herself by reflecting, that Mr De Crespigny was in the habit of confidentially hinting how much he felt embarrassed and annoyed by the necessity of gene-

ralizing his intimacies, that no gossiping reports might reach his very whimsical relative. "Because actually!" he one day whispered in confidence to Lady Towercliffe, "when my uncle becomes irritable, he threatens to make all sorts of ridiculous marriages himself; and it would be my last hour in his will, if he thought me heretic enough merely to dance with a Protestant partner. He would not engage so much as a housemaid of your persuasion; but for my own part, I leave all these concerns to the Abbé Mordaunt, who, to do him justice, lets me off very easily."

The difference of faith made wonderfully little difference in the intentions of those young ladies who believed themselves the objects of Mr De Crespigny's unacknowledged preference, for every bit of millinery in a ball-room was in a flutter of agitation whenever he approached; and certainly no one ever excelled more in the happy art of making those he conversed with rise in their own opinion, from his tact in showing how very high they stood in his, and the consequence was, that he al-

ready possessed a rare and romantic collection of sentimental valentines, sketches with his figure in the foreground, songs with the magical name of Louis conspicuously introduced, withered bouquets, anagrams, anonymous letters, and anonymous verses, all with a too-well-remembered history belonging to them, which called up a smile of derision, or a sigh of self-reproach, according as the case required, but all treasured as relics of former happy hours, which had perhaps been the history of a lifetime to the fair donors, and the diversion of a few days only to himself, while he secretly applauded his own dexterity in always escaping the matrimonial noose, and to them there remained only the silent remembrance of that intercourse, now for ever at an end, which they had believed was to last for life.

Mr De Crespigny's engagement book was nearly as complicated an affair as any ledger or day-book, and much more so than his own banker's account, for he arranged it on the most systematic principles of profit and loss. In whatever house he had been invited to

dine, he considered himself as "owing a quadrille" to one of the young ladies at the next assembly. If he had actually "sat under her father's mahogany," as he termed it, she might be perhaps entitled to two dances; and when he had spent the greater part of a summer in her mother's country house, that established a sort of sinking fund on her behalf, which entitled her to have the use of him as a partner, whenever he happened accidentally to be disengaged, though indeed nothing ever occurred accidentally in Captain De Crespigny's arrangements, for he never acted on impulse, but always on systematic calculation. He seemed, with his gay pell-mell manner, the most off-hand, careless, and undesigning of men; but even in the trifling affair of going to a ball, where he might literally have exclaimed, "I am monarch of all I survey," he invariably carried in his mind's eye a list of all those partners with whom policy or self-interest directed him to dance, and very seldom indeed did he swerve from his preconceived muster-roll.

It was a singular evidence of young De Crespigny's discretion and skill, that, while paying attentions which should either have never been paid at all, or never afterwards discontinued, and while, with all his fascinations, Lady Towercliffe declared it was dangerous to a young lady's happiness to be even introduced to him, still, in not one instance had "his intentions" ever yet been asked, and neither fathers, uncles, nor brothers, had betrayed the slightest symptoms of insurrection against his universal dominion, believing, as his excuse for delaying to propose was so perfectly unanswerable and respectable, that his intentions might safely be allowed to "lie on the table," while they awaited in breathless suspense the *denouement*, certainly to take place on Lord Doncaster's death.

Some of Mr De Crespigny's brother officers, envious perhaps of his extraordinary success in society, threw out sceptical hints respecting the certainty of his succession, and laughed sarcastically at the indefatigable vanity with which he evidently liked being thus torn to

pieces among the chaperons and dowagers of society; but he laughed as heartily as themselves. No one could ever get the start of him in a joke; and his associates, when he came in competition with any one of them, found it no laughing matter. He knew his own power—who does not know that?—and difficulties only enhanced his triumph.

Lord Doncaster often dryly remarked, that the best economist in Britain must certainly be Louis De Crespigny, as, to his certain knowledge, he possessed only L.300 a-year, and yet he seemed to revel in all the luxuries of life, besides having a great deal over for extravagance. There was no occasion for the young Cornet ever to think of dining at his club, as he might be entertained at the houses of three or four friends in a day, if he could have mustered as many appetites. In summer he incurred no expense, except to pay for his place occasionally on the top of a coach, or in a steam-boat, from one hospitable country-house to another, where gigs were sent a stage to meet him on the way, if he were expected

by the mail, or if by sea, a chariot might be seen waiting on the pier. He got "a mount" from one friend, the best seat in a barouche from another, and often the vacant place in a britschska from a third party, even to the expulsion of its more legitimate occupiers.

"De Crespigny has nothing on earth, and you see how he looks!" remarked his handsome friend Sir Patrick one day to Sir Arthur Dunbar; "yet how magnificently he contrives to live at the expense of all those deluded mortals who have disposable or indisposable daughters. His future prospects act like a cork jacket in society, keeping him always at the top. Last summer worthy Lord Towercliffe, with his rapidly increasing family and rapidly decreasing income, took De Crespigny in his gig to that old tumble-down castle of his in Argyleshire, where he spent six weeks, ruining the family in champagne and wax candles. The house became rather cold in September, so at last he accepted a cast in Lady Winandermere's carriage to that nest of nieces and daughters at Castle High-

combe, where he found excellent yachting and sea-bathing. There he lingered a month, till the brother of those four pretty Miss Vavasours bid still higher for his company, by offering him a mount at Kelso, and mentioning that he had a first-rate French cook a '*cordon bleu*,' who hires his own stall at the opera during the London season, and enjoys a salary and perquisites amounting to more than the best curacy in the English Church; and all this De Crespigny repays with a few frothy nothings, which he is for ever repeating to any young lady who will lend an ear. Those who beat the bush do not always snare the bird; and I wonder the manœuvring world does not yet see that he is evidently no marrying man."

"What sort of looking individual is 'a marrying man?'" asked Sir Arthur, slyly. "I am often told that you, for instance, do not look like a marrying man; but pray point me out any one who does, that I may become more a connoisseur on the subject than I am. As for what you say of Louis De Crespigny,

it sounds to my unpractised ear very like swindling; and he is not the youth I took him for if he live in such an element of deceit, sacrificing all sense of honour, all confidence, and all good feeling, for a worthless and transient popularity, or worse than all, for motives of mean heartless self-interest. Such a man is not worth the space he occupies in the world!"

The Admiral's honest indignation would have been vented in still stronger terms, could his upright and honourable mind have been made to understand how entirely every thought, word, and action of Mr De Crespigny's life was based on the most unswerving principles of cold, hard, unrelenting selfishness, and with what utter carelessness he seemed ready to trample on the wounded feelings of others; for it mattered not to him what degree of confidence he betrayed, or what degree of sorrow he inflicted. If in one house where he had been received as a son or a brother, he no longer found the cordial welcome of other days, a hundred other doors

were still opened wide to receive him, where he could boast of having been "very nearly caught," and carry on the same game as before, which was a pastime to him, though fatal to the peace of many, who would willingly have died, rather than betray the injury their feelings had suffered, when, after passing through the ordeal of his assiduities, they found themselves beguiled and cheated of all that was deepest and most sacred in their earthly affections—robbed without compunction by one who gave no return—who watched with elated triumph the growing delusion of those whom he had marked as victims to his own self-love, and whom he appeared to consider all in all to his happiness, till they found out at last that they were in reality less than nothing to him; yet the deception admitted of no redress. He lived on in a sort of cowardly impunity; for no young girl endowed with sensibility, and conscious of her own injuries, could desire, after entrusting him with the whole story of her hopes and affections, that the truth should be known;

and his was a crime against which no evidence can be brought; for who could describe the tender nothings—the refined insinuations—the looks which say everything and mean nothing—the wordless language of the eyes, with which an undeclared love may be safely and yet obviously professed? What but a smile of ridicule or of censure could attend on such a detail of "unutterable things?" But with Louis De Crespigny nothing was unutterable; for he could say and unsay the same things two hundred times, and they always seemed to carry as much or as little weight as he pleased at the moment, while he entered society as a school-boy rushes into a garden, eagerly to pursue the brilliant insects fluttering in the sunbeams, ready to crush and injure them all for his momentary diversion, and yet on his guard to retreat in good order, should there appear to be the slightest danger of annoyance or discomfort to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

Search, seek, and know how this foul murder comes!
SHAKESPEARE.

It was impossible to pass an hour in the society of Sir Arthur Dunbar, without seeing much to admire, and much also to love,—there was a sturdy, resolute, old-fashioned sense of honour in all his actions, tempered by the kindest and most considerate attention to the feelings, as well as to the interests of all with whom he might be associated, and his sentiments were tinctured by a generous liberality, only limited in action by the rigid restraints consequent on a very narrow income, which he had never been known to exceed, though he was often heard jocularly to re-

mark, that the surplus, after his yearly accounts were paid, would scarcely buy him a pair of gloves.

Though the fire of Sir Arthur's eyes had been quenched by approaching blindness, and his weather-beaten countenance had been scarred in battle, and hardened by facing every tempest which had blown for half a century, yet his aspect had an air of habitual distinction and conscious dignity which commanded instant respect. There was an energy in the expression of his feelings, and a straight-forward pursuit of what he thought right in all his actions, which gave him a singular influence over the affections and the conduct of those with whom he wished to associate, and the admirable use he made of which no one afterwards ever had cause to regret. His early life had been one full of action and of vigorous exertion, seeking, with old-fashioned patriotism, the honour of his country, more than the promotion of his own interests; but in advanced years, when no longer able publicly to distinguish himself,

he directed his time and talents to the diffusion of happiness at home, and to a zealous, diligent, and humble preparation for that long and quiet home to which he believed himself rapidly approaching, and which he contemplated with the best of all philosophy,—that of a truly devoted Christian.

With all the blunt frankness of his sailor-like manner, Sir Arthur could nevertheless testify an almost feminine gentleness and sympathy towards the unfortunate. He was often discovered to have exerted clandestinely, a degree of activity and zeal in serving the most needy and desolate, which, to a mind less eager and generous, would have seemed almost incredible,—he never lacerated the feelings of those who came to him for comfort, by attempting to convince the sufferer, as most people begin by doing, on such occasions, that the misfortune, whatever it be, is all his own fault,—and he was quite as ready, as well as much better pleased, to rejoice with those that rejoiced, than to weep with those that wept, without ever, at any period of life, hav-

ing found a place for envy in his kindest of hearts, which

> "Turn'd at the touch of joy or woe,
> And turning trembled too."

With a good-humoured smile at his own credulity in having believed that Louis De Crespigny could ever be serious in proposing to sacrifice a day of his gay and busy life, to a prosing tête-à-tête on the sea-beach with an old man like himself, Sir Arthur dismissed the subject from his thoughts, and finally relinquished all hope of seeing his young friend, after a short soliloquy, in which he ended, by slyly hoping that the gay Cornet would never cause those who might feel it more, to regret his having jilted them.

Not many days following, the Admiral had retired at his usual early hour to bed, and after some time passed in profound repose, he was suddenly startled into wakefulness at the dawn of day, while the watchman was calling the hour of "Past four o'clock," by a loud and vehement knocking at the front-door of

his house, accompanied by the most fearful and vociferous out-cries of "murder!" It was the sharp, shrill tone of a woman in the agony of fear, becoming more and more vehement at every repetition of the cry, while Sir Arthur dressed with the rapidity of a practised seaman, and hurried down stairs, where he found his maid-of-all-work, and his man-of-all-work, already assembled in breathless consternation round a trembling, terrified-looking servant girl, whose eyes were gleaming with an expression of frantic alarm, while, from her incoherent exclamations, Sir Arthur could only gather that some act of unutterable horror had been perpetrated in an opposite house, the windows of which were all partially closed, except one in the upper story, which was wide open, and seemed to be much broken and shattered.

Without waiting another moment to investigate the business, Sir Arthur strode across the street, hurried in at the open door, and guided by a momentary cry of childish distress, he mounted the staircase, with an acti-

vity beyond his years, three steps at a time, and precipitately entered the nearest room he could find. There he paused for a moment on finding himself in a splendidly-furnished bed-room, adorned with a degree of taste and elegance, far excelling what was customary in so obscure-looking a lodging, and the Admiral was about hastily to withdraw, when he became suddenly transfixed to the spot, and his eye seemed perfectly blasted by the spectacle which met his agitated and astonished gaze, while several moments elapsed before he had nerve to advance, and ascertain the reality of a scene, which filled him with horror.

On a magnificent couch, the rich coverlet of which was drenched in blood, that had sprinkled the floor, and spouted to the very roof of the room, lay the cold stiffened corpse of a young female, whose head seemed to have been nearly severed from her body, while a violent contusion appeared upon her forehead. The wrist of her right hand, with which she had probably attempted to defend herself, had also been deeply cut, and in her hand she

grasped a quantity of dark hair, which seemed to have been torn from the head of her assassin in the struggle for life. Her teeth were clenched, and her eye-balls were starting from their sockets with a look of agonised fear, most appalling to behold, and her long fair hair which lay in disordered billows on her shoulders, was matted with gore.

A table near the bed had been overturned and broken,—a knife of very peculiar form, bent and distorted, lay conspicuously upon the pillow, as if placed there on purpose to attract notice, and the carpet, on which a pool of congealed blood had gathered, was likewise strewed with money, rings, bijouterie. trinkets, and plate.

Nestled in a little crib, close beside the murdered woman, but plunged in a slumber so profound, that it could not be natural, slept undisturbed and uninjured, a lovely boy of about eight years old. His head rested on his arm, and a clustering profusion of jet-black hair fell over his blooming countenance, in which there was a look of almost death-like

repose. Awakened with the utmost difficulty by Sir Arthur, the child, who appeared to be of wondrous beauty, opened for a moment, a pair of bright blue, star-like eyes, and with a cry of terror, called for his mother, but a moment afterwards, overcome by irresistible drowsiness, his rosy cheek dropped upon the pillow, his heavy eyes were closed, and he relapsed into the same strange, mysterious insensibility as before.

It was a fearful sight, that young mother, with her look of ghastly agony turned towards the ruddy healthful countenance of her child in his peaceful slumbers, and it was evident that her last thought had been for him, as his clothes were still convulsively held in her left hand, while a vain attempt had obviously been made to tear them asunder,—many deep cuts being visible on the child's night-gown, though his person had been left uninjured.

Sir Arthur compassionately snatched the boy up in his arms, to hurry him away from the dreadful scene, and called the watchman, who instantly raised an alarm, and summoned

the whole neighbourhood to his assistance, when before ten minutes had elapsed, the room was filled with a crowd of agitated spectators, scared by the tremendous event, and crowding around the bed in every attitude of astonishment, terror, and commiseration, uttering exclamations of alarm, gazing helplessly at the frightful spectacle, and forming a thousand conjectures respecting the tragical event, instead of attempting to give any rational assistance.

"Not a moment is to be lost!" said Sir Arthur, in the steady authoritative tone of one accustomed in great emergencies, to command, "Where are the other servants?" asked he, turning to the girl who had first given an alarm, "and where is your master?"

"I have no master, Sir!" replied she in a low incoherent whisper. "I think the lady was not married; but perhaps, Sir, she might be! A gentleman called here last week."

"What was he like?" asked Sir Arthur, earnestly.

"A sort of clergyman, or gentleman, Sir!

I don't know nothing about him, but he visited sometimes at this here house. No good ever came of it though, for my poor young mistress was always in sore distress after he'd be gone away. Last time there be much loud talking and argufying in the parlour, but it was none of my business to listen. I never pays no attention to what the quality says!"

"Here is a most disastrous business!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, in a deep and solemn tone, while he glanced at the crowd of white, livid, ashy faces, collected around him. "Let us remember, my friends, that every trifle we can observe here, may be of the utmost importance in bringing this dreadful mystery to light. Touch nothing, but have all your eyes about you to detect what you can, and let us instantly search the house."

With the little boy in his arms, who had awakened, bewildered and terrified by the sight of so many strangers, Sir Arthur, followed by the whole troop of spectators, who huddled together with evident symptoms of

fearful apprehension, proceeded minutely to scrutinize the whole house.

In one apartment on the garret floor, belonging, as the terrified housemaid declared, to a person who had been taken in, she believed out of charity, to teach the little boy, the bed was disordered, as if the sleeper, when hastily rising, had thrown the bedclothes almost upon the floor. The window-frame was broken to shivers, by some one violently forcing his way out; but no other sign appeared of the room having been inhabited. Not an article of clothing could be found in the drawers; not a book or a paper; and the search was about to be abandoned, when Sir Arthur perceived in an obscure corner of the room, a man's glove, stained with blood, and a red silk handkerchief, from which the initials had evidently been erased with great care, though he hoped that some one more accustomed to such investigations might yet be able to trace them.

The next room which Sir Arthur attempt-

ed to enter had the door double-locked; and though the party which accompanied him made a noise of knocking and hammering that might have raised the dead, no answer was returned, till at length, losing all patience, they broke it open, and impetuously rushed forward, all gazing eagerly around, as if they expected an immediate *denouement* of the mystery to take place; but some of those who were foremost shrunk back in astonishment, and hastily made way for Sir Arthur, while the servant girl earnestly whispered in his ear, with a look of anxiety and alarm, "This is Sarah Davenport's room! the child's maid! Better not disturb her, Sir! She is sometimes hardly right in her mind, I think!"

When Sir Arthur, disregarding the simple girl's warning, advanced, he perceived with surprise, a very young woman, scarcely twenty, who started up in bed, with a look of bewildered perplexity, as he approached, asking in accents of tremulous alarm, what had occurred to cause this extraordinary disturb-

ance. Her cheek was of an ashy paleness, her very lips were blanched, and her voice sounded husky and hollow with agitation; but all this might be attributed to so sudden an inroad of strangers, while again and again she asked with quivering accents, whether any accident had occurred, and why they all appeared so alarmed.

"At all events, my darling boy is safe!" added she, holding out her arms to the child, who instantly recoiled from her, with looks of unequivocal terror, and hiding his face on the shoulder of Sir Arthur, he sobbed aloud with a degree of passionate grief and agitation, which seemed almost beyond his years. The observant eye of Sir Arthur perceived that a dark scowl of malignity flitted for a moment across the beautiful features of Sarah, whose brow became singularly contracted over her flashing eyes; but making an effort instantly to recover herself, she averted her countenance, and added in a subdued voice of assumed tranquillity, "The child never knows me in a cap! I forgot to take it off, but the

hurry of seeing so many strangers has confused me!"

In an instant she snatched off her night-cap, when her shoulders and neck became covered with a cloud of dark massy ringlets, floating down below her waist, and shading her pallid countenance, which had assumed an expression of livid horror, and unnatural wildness. "Let him come to me now!" added she again, stretching out her arms with a ghastly smile; but the boy struggled more vehemently than before, and clung to Sir Arthur with a tenacity and confidence, which deeply touched the old veteran's heart, who tried to soothe the terrified child by every endearment which his kind nature could suggest, while his attention was nevertheless enchained by observing the rigid, marble look of the young woman's countenance; the dragged and corpse-like appearance which stole over her features, as if she had suffered a stroke of paralysis.

"You have been frightened enough already, poor boy!" said Sir Arthur, soothingly. "No

one shall hurt you! With me at least, you are safe! Stay where you are, and do not be alarmed! No one shall touch you but myself!"

The child seemed to understand Sir Arthur's promise of protection, and his head drooped sleepily down, while his eyes again closed in that deep unnatural slumber, from which he had been with so much difficulty aroused, till at length,

> "Now like a shutting flower, the senses close.
> And on him lies the beauty of repose."

"Young woman!" said Sir Arthur, bending a look of penetrating scrutiny on Sarah Davenport, "how came you to be quietly asleep, and partly dressed too! while your mistress was murdered in the room immediately below! Did you hear no disturbance? Was no alarm given?" —— ——

"My mistress!!" exclaimed Sarah, clasping her hands in an attitude of astonishment, and speaking as if every word would choke her, though not a muscle of her face was altered

from the fixed and rigid look it had previously worn. "Oh! what will become of me!"

"What will become of you!!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, sternly, fixing his penetrating eye upon her. "Think rather of your murdered mistress! Come, come, girl! you performed that start very well; but I know good acting! I greatly fear you are more concerned in this horrid business than we at first suspected, and much more than you would wish to acknowledge. Get up instantly, and follow me!"

There was something fearful and appalling in the silence which reigned among the many persons who had gathered around, when Sarah, as a prisoner, was led into the chamber of death. A look of shuddering horror distorted for a moment, her pale and haggard countenance, when she was unwillingly drawn forward to the place where her deceased mistress lay, and Sir Arthur with silent solemnity, pointed to the ghastly spectacle. His eyes were intensely and most mournfully fixed on the prisoner's sullen and nearly livid coun-

tenance, while she silently clung to a chair to support herself.

Sarah appeared neither startled nor astonished after the first thrill of horror, but with a cold stony look of almost preternatural calmness, she muttered to herself in a low tone, which became nevertheless distinctly audible to all the spectators, and was evidently meant to be heard,—

"Why am I brought here! I know nothing about this! The poor lady has committed suicide! No wonder! She often wished herself dead! She had a miserable life of it, and has got rest at last! I wish!" added Sarah suddenly, with vehement and almost frantic energy, "O how I wish that I could change places with her! O that I could be that cold senseless image, without memory or feeling, without hope or fear, shut up from living wretchedness in everlasting sleep!"

"Let us hope that the Almighty has in mercy received her never-dying soul, and that in His own good time he will reveal the guilty assassins, who sent her so suddenly to judg-

ment," said Sir Arthur, solemnly. "Unburden your own mind now, by confessing all, and be assured it will relieve the agony you are evidently suffering. Murder is like fire, it cannot be smothered long."

"I know nothing! What could I know!" replied Sarah, hurriedly. "She has destroyed herself, or thieves have broken into the house and robbed her. Could I help that?"

"No one has broken into this house," replied Sir Arthur, scanning the expression of her fixed, and apparently unalterable features. "But you can perhaps tell us who escaped by that shattered window above? Not a lock is broken—not a door is injured—not a trinket seems missing, among the many scattered around the room! Here is money in abundance, if gold had been the inducement! Some other motive has provoked this crime—jealousy perhaps—or revenge—"

At the last word an angry hectic rushed over the face, arms, and neck of the prisoner, and her eye glittered for a moment with an unnatural fire, which rapidly faded away.

leaving her as pale and death-like as the corpse beside which she stood, and on which her eye now rested with a look of cold and passionless indifference.

"It was only yesterday that she wished herself dead! this is her own doing!" said Sarah, turning away. "Why am I brought here! This is too dreadful! too shocking! It will drive me mad—it will! it will!" added she, with rising agitation; and then suddenly bursting into a hideous maniacal laugh, which rang with fearful sound through the gloomy chamber, and caused the horror-struck spectators to fall hastily back,—"I would have saved her! I would! What woman ever sheds blood! but it was too late! I would have saved her, as I saved the child; but it was done—kill me! kill me! if you have any mercy, let me die! let me hide myself in the grave for ever!" Saying these words, with a scream of agony, she fell upon the floor in violent convulsions, from which it was nearly an hour before she entirely recovered, when faint, weak, and exhausted, Sir Arthur suggested

that she should be carried to bed; but before she left the room, anxious if possible to elucidate the mystery, and to gain some clue for pursuing the actual murderer, he detained Sarah during a moment, and desired that a glass of water might be brought for her, hoping that the violent emotion she had betrayed might lead her to a full confession. Laying his hand then upon her arm, in tones of deep and awful solemnity, he looked at her, and pointed once more to the corpse, saying,—

"By a dark and harrowing crime those lips are sealed in the silence of death! What a tale they could disclose, if they might but once describe all that passed in this room a few hours ago! Those very walls have echoed this night to her cries! You alone seem able to throw any light upon the horrid deed. You could tell all, or I am greatly mistaken. We shall yet know, at the day of judgment, if not sooner, how this fearful act was done. Consider, Sarah Davenport, that undying remorse will pursue you through life, and be the fitting tenant of your soul, unless by timely

repentance you avert the fearful doom, and hereafter your heart will be tortured by the pangs of eternal despair. Unfortunate woman! consider now, or during the long period of your approaching imprisonment, whether it be better to repent and confess at once. or to confess and suffer everlastingly."

Not a word or a look gave evidence that Sarah so much as heard Sir Arthur speak. Her large eyes were vacantly fixed on the ground, her hands were firmly clenched, and her teeth were set with an air of resolute determination, when, after a silence of several minutes, during which her very stillness was frightful, supported by some of the strangers around, she walked with almost mechanical unconsciousness out of the room.

Again and again the house was searched that day—the very floors and wainscots torn up; but not a trace could be discovered to throw light upon the cause or circumstances of this disastrous event; and equally remarkable was it, that no hint could be obtained of who or what the murdered lady had been.

There were books on the table in various languages, but not one retained any name written on the boards, though it was evident that on some a coat of arms had once been pasted, and subsequently defaced. Not a letter or paper could be found with either signature or direction, though one or two notes were discovered beneath the pillow of the bed, all anonymous, but written in a similar hand, and containing nothing that could identify the writer; and several sketches of the child, beautifully executed in various attitudes, were found in a portfolio, beside which were written many simple verses, containing the most fervent expressions of tender affection and anxious solicitude for the boy, and the most passionate bursts of melancholy, but all conceived in general terms, which baffled the researches of curiosity.

"This hand is disguised, yet surely I have seen it before," said Sir Arthur, musingly examining the anonymous notes, which related chiefly to remittances of money. "The face of that appalling spectacle sometimes seems

also familiar to me. Have I not met with it already, or is this only the delusion of an excited mind? These deep and prominent eyelids—the small aquiline nose—the delicately-pencilled eye-brows—and that mouth of perfect grace and beauty, which seems still almost to speak without a tongue, in the language of heart-broken misery, telling of deceived affections—of blighted hopes—of unpitied and solitary tears."

Sir Arthur seated himself on a chair beside the couch for some moments in agitated reflection, vainly endeavouring to collect his thoughts, and form them into some tangible remembrance. "It is a strange and bewildering sensation, to look at the mute features of this death-like image, and to feel as if once she had been known to me in her days of youth and bloom. A vague harassing perplexity besets me in trying to realize the floating and flickering remembrances, which dimly mock my efforts to catch them. It seems like staring out on a dark night, and trying to distinguish some busy scene, where

figures and lights appear, and vanish again before they can be identified. Where have we met before? Surely in some dream of former days I once saw a smile of joy on those pallid lips—I once beheld those fixed and glassy eyes lighted up with intelligence! but my treacherous memory will not help me—it recalls enough to torture me with perplexity, and not enough to be of any actual avail."

Sir Arthur wearied himself with intense efforts to identify the lineaments before him, but in vain. They were lovely indeed. and many a stranger came likewise to try whether they could be recognized, but without success. The fearful story circulated like wild-fire—the excitement and curiosity it produced became intense; but not a gleam of light was thrown upon the dark and mysterious event.

Among the many who hurried to behold the murdered woman before her remains were disturbed, two gentlemen arrived one evening after dusk, and having ascertained that neither the Admiral nor any other stranger was in the house, they gave Sir Arthur's servant.

Martin, who was in attendance, a handsome donation, and desiring him not to follow, hurried up stairs, and remained in the room alone for several minutes. Both were much muffled up, and evidently avoided any scrutiny of their countenances; but they seemed greatly agitated on leaving the room; and as they hastened past Martin, and threw themselves into a hackney coach which awaited them at some distance, one of the party had appeared so overcome, that he could not walk without support. Much conjecture was aroused by this incident, which seemed to increase the mystery and interest attached to the melancholy circumstances, and not a doubt could be entertained that these untimely visitors had a more than common connection with the affair, but of what nature, and to what degree, could only admit of very vague conjecture.

Nothing could exceed the active interest taken in all the proceedings by Sir Arthur, who seemed to forget all his years and infirmities, while keenly promoting the cause of

truth and justice. Much as he had formerly bemoaned the trouble entailed upon him by deceased friends, many of whom had bequeathed their estates and children to his guardianship, he felt on this occasion, a pity so intense, for the nameless, friendless, and helpless boy, thus unexpectedly and tragically thrown on his compassion, that he publicly pledged himself to harbour and protect the child in the mean time, trusting that some connections might at last be found, to whom he more naturally belonged. "Life has had a mournful commencement for him, poor boy! His days are dark, and his friends are few," said Sir Arthur, with a strong emotion of pity, "but we must hope the best hereafter, and do the best that can be done in the mean time, trusting that a wise Providence, who cast him on my care and kindness, will also watch over his future welfare."

On the night previous to that appointed by Sir Arthur for committing to the grave the last remains of the murdered lady, he who had so often faced death in every form, and

"kiss'd the mouth of a cannon in battle," yet felt himself awed and deeply affected in contemplating the solemn preparations for committing to the tomb one so young, so deeply injured, and so apparently unlamented. It was with mournful and mysterious wonder that he stood beside the corpse, and contemplated that mortal frame, from which the spirit had been so suddenly and so cruelly driven; and he could not but imagine the scenes of love and joy which those eyes had once probably looked upon—the busy thoughts that had hurried through that lifeless head—the warm affections that had flowed through that heart, now for ever at rest.

While yet his mind was dwelling with painful interest on all the thoughts which crowded through his fancy, Martin hastily entered the room, and in an agitated voice requested Sir Arthur's immediate presence in the entrance-hall, as some persons were there who had orders to communicate only with himself.

On arriving in the passage. Sir Arthur was astonished, and almost startled, to find seve-

ral porters in the passage, carrying a coffin magnificently decorated, and covered with a velvet pall, on the summit of which was conspicuously placed a large brass plate, with the date of the murder engraved, and bearing no other inscription, but these two words in German characters—

My Wife.

"This is strange!" said Sir Arthur, turning anxiously to the men. "Who sent you here?"

"A gentleman left his orders with the undertaker, Sir. No questions were to be asked; and he paid for everything at once, leaving neither name nor direction," said the man who seemed to have charge of the business. "We know nothing of him; but he desired us to deliver this note into your own hands, and perhaps it may tell you more."

Sir Arthur hastily tore open the letter offered to him, giving an impatient glance at the handwriting, which was exactly similar to that of the anonymous notes he had

already so carefully and so vainly scrutinized. He was astonished; and solemn as the occasion was, almost amused to observe that his name and direction had been carefully cut out of the newspaper paragraph which he quarrelled with some weeks before at the Club, and that this unknown correspondent, to prevent the possibility of his writing being detected by those who examined the outside, had pasted these printed letters on the cover, " Sir Arthur Dunbar, Portobello." The packet was sealed with a plain impression on black wax; the paper bore a broad black border; and there was an evident tremulousness in the pen which had inscribed these words:—

" Enclosed is the sum of L.200, for the benefit of Sir Arthur Dunbar's adopted ward, Henry De Lancey. The same amount shall be transmitted annually, so long as no effort is made to trace from whence it originates; and the day he comes of age, it shall be increased to L.500 per annum. The first attempt to find out his connections will be de-

tected, and shall put a final period to all intercourse. The unfortunate woman was married to one who remained ignorant, till a few hours ago, of the circumstances attending her death. She disgraced his name, and abandoned his house; nevertheless her child may one day, perhaps, be acknowledged; and the whole expenses of his education shall be liberally defrayed, till he is grown up and has chosen a profession."

It was a strange, cold, heartless communication from a parent, without one expression of relenting affection, one word of solicitude for his happiness, or one expression of gratitude to Sir Arthur for taking upon himself so arduous a charge; but still it was to a certain extent most satisfactory, the Admiral being relieved of a great perplexity, by having thus ascertained in what rank of life the interesting boy should be educated, as he felt justified now in obtaining for him the highest cultivation, an advantage to which he attached the utmost importance, often repeating his favourite aphorism, that " principle is the

helm, and learning the main-sail, which carries a young man forward in life; but both would be useless, unless the wind, which 'bloweth where it listeth,' be sent from Heaven to guide and direct him safely into harbour."

CHAPTER V.

——— I sum up half mankind,
And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams. COWPER.

THE day of trial at length arrived, and the court, from the roof to the floor, seemed one sea of faces, crowded together like the "studies of heads" on a painter's canvass. During the legal investigation, which was conducted with deep solemnity and anxious perseverance, the mystery became still deeper, and more inscrutable. No appearance of a robbery could be observed, except that the finger of the lady's hand, on which a wedding ring had probably been worn, was much bruis-

ed and discoloured, as if, immediately after her decease, it had been violently torn off; and a vain attempt had evidently been made to snatch away a gold chain hung round her neck, to which was appended a small broken miniature frame, set with brilliants, and adorned with what seemed to represent a very antique coronet. The portrait which it once enclosed, had been, with obvious difficulty, removed, as the marks were visible all round, of some sharp-pointed instrument having been inserted in the frame, to which there still adhered several broken fragments of glass.

Sarah Davenport, who had been fully committed for trial, on suspicion of being an accomplice, refused to give any references as to character, and was strongly suspected of habitually concealing her real name, and of more than once assuming those that were fictitious, as her clothes and linen appeared to be marked with various initials, but in not one case did they bear those that she pretended were her own. It was evident that she laboured

under a powerful, but forcibly-subdued excitement; yet, with a tone and manner externally cold and hard as Siberian ice, she persisted in professing her own perfect innocence, and her utter unconsciousness of anything that might by possibility lead to a discovery of the perpetrators. She coldly, and almost calmly, threw back glance for glance, on the spectators nearest her, who were keenly watching every turn of her countenance, while dark surmises, and fearful conjectures, were whispered in murmurs of horror on every side; but at length her eye wandered to a distant part of the court, when suddenly a livid paleness flashed upon her face—an indescribable but startling lustre glittered in her eyes—her whole frame shook, as in the coldest blast of winter, and with a suppressed groan of agony and fear, she bowed her head upon her hands, and sunk fainting upon the floor. At the same time, a man was observed hastily to leave the court, and, gliding with rapid steps through the narrow passages, disappeared, before any of those who stood near had pre-

with astonishing precision, the boy acted over the whole scene, recapitulated some of the language they had used, and described how his mother had clung to him with frantic eagerness, saying she would promise anything, if she might only retain her child; how the stranger, who was very tall, and wore a black coat, had spoken again with angry vehemence, before he left the room; and how his mother, when alone, had prayed and wept over him with looks of agonized and desolate grief, until he had been carried away to bed by the maid, who administered some medicine to him, which she said the doctor had ordered.

He spoke much also of a large old room, hung with pictures, in which his earliest days had been passed, and of a small dark apartment close beside it, into which he had often been precipitately hurried, apparently for concealment, and where toys and sweetmeats had been always provided to keep him quiet, while he was punished with the utmost severity, for making the slightest

noise; and he still remembered with looks of apprehension, the gentleman dressed in black, who most frequently visited him there, and often caused his mother to weep bitterly.

Sarah Davenport was then recalled, and rigidly cross-examined, respecting the gentleman who had visited at the house; but she doggedly asserted her entire ignorance respecting his rank in life, or connections, and pertinaciously maintained that the lady's death had been her own voluntary act, and that the sleeping potion had been given to the boy by his mother's own imperative orders, as she did not herself know even what it contained.

During a long and anxious consultation of the jury, there was a hushed and intense silence in the crowded court, so still and unbroken, that the breathing of an infant would have been audible, while every eye perused the countenance of the prisoner, with an intensity that brought a hectic flush, burning like fire, upon her cheek, and she gazed

around with a glance of anger that caused her beauty for the moment to look like that of a fiend or a fury.

At length, after arduously scrutinising every atom of evidence that could be gathered, the jury, though morally certain of the prisoner's being an accomplice in the crime, felt unwillingly obliged to bring in a verdict of "not proven," and she was immediately liberated, after which, amidst the yells, jeers, and execrations of the populace, who were convinced of her criminality, she hurried from the court, and was seen no more.

Nothing is half so attractive as a mystery, and many crowded at first, with a temporary enthusiasm, to see the beautiful boy, so strangely bereaved, and so cruelly abandoned; but the interest and excitement of hearing and relating his story were soon superseded by greater wonders and fresher news. In a world where all are rushing on headlong in pursuit of novelty, and where events, great or small, are speedily hurried into one common oblivion, people were tired at last of think-

ing or talking about young Henry and his concerns.

Every one of the Admiral's friends hinted that he could have managed the whole affair ten times better than Sir Arthur; all blamed him for many things, and praised him for very few; the Admiral was wondered at, criticised, discussed, admired, pitied, and censured, more than he remembered to have been for many years before; and the givers of advice were lavish of propositions and objections, all which were borne by their venerable friend with good-humoured indifference, whether adopted or not. At length several perfectly new murders from London came on the tapis in society; those who liked reading in the Jack Sheppard style were satiated with studies from the life; the Morning Post assumed a terrifying interest; and the lady of fashion who consulted Sir Henry Halford about her appetite, because she could no longer enjoy her murders and robberies at breakfast, would have thought, when they were coming out hot and hot every week, that

it was a wearisome repetition to speculate another hour upon a murder nearly a month old.

In short, "the Portobello story" ceased to be told or listened to. Henry had had his day. There is no such thing now as a nine days' wonder, because nothing lasts so long. Young De Lancey had been talked of as much as any reasonable being could expect to be talked of; and now it was universally voted a bore whenever the subject occurred in conversation; for, as Lady Towercliffe remarked, with a very long-drawn yawn, when, for the last time, it was alluded to in her presence, "It was a shocking, barbarous, and really startling affair; but all stories should be allowed to die out like an echo, which grows fainter and fainter at every repetition. One cannot be for ever talking of the same thing."

When Henry De Lancey lost one parent, he certainly gained another in Sir Arthur, who often afterwards remarked, that in no instance could virtue be more obviously its own reward, than in the case of any kindness he had shewn to this fascinating boy, whose gay joy-

ous spirits became a source of perpetual amusement to him, while the Admiral seemed to derive new life from watching the frolicsome gambols of his young companion, occasionally enlivened by the gleeful vivacity of his niece Marion, when she escaped a single day from the trammels of school, bringing generally in her train two of her favourite juvenile companions, Clara Granville and Caroline Smythe, both several years older than herself.

On many occasions the sensibility of Henry De Lancey seemed already to have attained almost the depth and intensity of manhood, so strong were the bursts of natural feeling with which he occasionally spoke or acted, while it was deeply affecting to trace throughout the extraordinary progress thus early made in his education, the careful culture given to his remarkable abilities—the pains bestowed by his solitary parent to strengthen his mind for future difficulties and sorrows, the earliest and worst of which she could so little have foreseen or apprehended.

With considerable thoughtfulness of cha-

racter, however, and natural integrity of mind, which Sir Arthur was delighted from the first to remark, yet, when the merry group of young friends assembled together on the shore at Portobello, building houses of sand, or running eagerly in search of shells, it would have been difficult to say which was the most carelessly happy, while the Admiral seemed to borrow their young spirits for the time, and gazed with ceaseless delight on those joyous countenances, radiant with laughter and smiles, which were archly turned towards their aged playmate, sometimes with a challenge to run after them, or lighted up with smiles of affection when they brought him a bouquet of his favourite flowers, torn roughly from the stems, and crushed and crumpled in their little hands.

Sir Arthur often seemed almost ashamed to betray the engrossing interest and delight he felt in his young companion, who gained every day a stronger hold upon his affections, and it appeared as if he were anxious to forget that a time had ever existed when the

playful and interesting boy was unknown to his heart; but a circumstance occurred, not long after Henry's adoption, which brought painfully to mind, with greatly increased solicitude, the fearful mystery that hung over his origin, proving also that danger still threatened him from some unforeseen quarter.

While the whole party of his young guests were noisily engaged on the shore in a game at hide-and-seek, one day in the month of July, Sir Arthur had seated himself on a bench within sight of them, sometimes watching their gambols with pleasure, and frequently conning over a newspaper, which proved by undeniable and satisfactory demonstration, that the country was entirely ruined—that the Government was coming to an end—that the Houses of Lords and Commons would be completely demolished—that the ministry had not another day to exist—and, as a grand climax, that anarchy, confusion, bankruptcy, and revolution, were about finally to drop their extinguisher over Great Britain. Sir Arthur had read the same thing in different

words every day during fifty years, and under twenty varied administrations; yet still the wonder grew, how a constitution so mismanaged could so long survive, and that when all was wrong at the head of the country, it still had a leg to stand on. The Admiral's patriotic meditations had been several times interrupted by repeated complaints from the little girls, that Henry had hid himself so well, they could not possibly find him; but he was too much pre-occupied to give the subject much attention, till at length Martin announced that the children's dinner had waited some time, and that still the boy was not to be found, though his companions had been searching for him at least half an hour.

Upon hearing this, Sir Arthur hastily started up, making a considerable expenditure of energetic and wondrous exclamations, while he gazed around with increasing surprise at the wide waste of sand, like an Arabian desert, with which he was on every side encompassed, and where it seemed to him as if a mouse could not be long concealed.

A hasty and most anxious search was instantly commenced in the garden, while Sir Arthur and Martin shouted the name of Henry at the full pitch of their voices, but in vain; not a sound was heard in reply, nor was there a spot unexamined in which he could by possibility be lurking.

The Admiral now became seriously alarmed at so unaccountable a disappearance, especially when the child's gardening tools, with which he had been last observed, were found mutilated and broken, at a great distance, on the beach—one of his shoes had fallen off close to the water—and his hat lay nearly buried in the tide. Sir Arthur instantly summoned the police to his aid, but the search continued fruitless, till at length the dreadful conjecture became more and more probable, that Henry must have rashly ventured into the water, and been washed away by the waves—in pursuance of which apprehension Sir Arthur summoned more assistance, that the water might instantly be dragged.

Martin, meantime, no less active than his master, had accidentally met a stranger on the beach, who mentioned, on hearing of his alarm, that on the road to Leith, half an hour before, he had observed a boy struggling and screaming in the arms of a female, dressed like a nursery-maid, who complained loudly that the child would not go home, when a young man, rather strangely dressed, and of very singular appearance, had instantly offered his assistance, and carried him forcibly onwards. This gentleman said he had stopped the woman to remonstrate with her on using the boy so roughly, as a cap was drawn over his eyes, and he seemed to suffer agonies of terror, sobbing convulsively, and trembling in every limb; but the man had answered in reply, with a strong Irish accent, that he would see the child safe to his friends, and let no one do the poor boy "a taste of harm." The stranger added indifferently, that it was no affair of his, therefore he ceased to interfere; but he thought both the man and the

woman had a very bad expression, and he would not trust either of them with his dog for an hour, to use it kindly.

Without wasting time in returning to communicate what he had heard, Martin hurried forward to Leith, where, with reckless speed and untiring diligence, he threaded all the narrow streets, and elbowed his way among carts, carriages, parcels, and passengers, till at length he reached the pier, to which he had been so eagerly aiming his steps. At its farthest point stood a smoking steam-boat in full boil, while men and women, boxes, packages, bags, and trunks, were pouring in; and at length, as he breathlessly approached within some hundred yards, an arbitrary little bell was rung, to summon stragglers on board, and to hurry stragglers away.

A single plank, connecting the steam-boat with the pier, was on the point of being withdrawn, when Martin approached; and while he paused, in momentary hesitation whether to pursue his almost hopeless search, the steward peremptorily desired him to hasten

on board instantly, if he were coming at all, as not a moment more could be lost.

At this moment a cry, almost amounting to a scream of childish joy, became audible on the deck—a young boy was seen vehemently struggling in the arms of a female; and in an instant, pursued by a man who vainly endeavoured to overtake him, he rushed past the steward, ran across the temporary bridge, and clasped Martin round the knees, exclaiming, with eager incoherent exclamations of almost hysterical delight, "Take me, Martin! take me! O let me go home to Sir Arthur! I did not come away without leave! I did not indeed! That naughty horrid woman forced me! She tied a cap over my face, and would not let me go back! I have been so frightened and so sorry," added the child, bursting into tears, and sobbing as if his heart would break; "I thought Sir Arthur would be angry, and I thought, perhaps, I would never see him again! O take me home, Martin! take me home! and let me never see these people again!"

The boy put his hand, with an air of happy confidence and security, into that of Martin, who snatched him up in his arms, with a thousand expressions of joyful surprise; but a moment afterwards, when he recollected himself, his first impulse was to secure the culprits who had decoyed Henry away, and to deliver them up to a magistrate for examination. With this intention, he looked hastily round, intending to cause their immediate apprehension; but the steam-boat had sailed off; and all the gesticulations he could make to bring them back, only caused the steward laughingly to shake his head, thinking that Martin had merely missed his passage, as he deserved, for not showing more alacrity in obeying his injunctions to embark.

At Portobello, meantime, Sir Arthur had suffered agonies of grief, and even of self-reproach, thinking he had too securely relied on the safety of his young protégé; and with a heavy heart he was still directing his steps, and conducting his assistants to the most probable places for finding the child's body, hav-

ing already ordered his maid to have every thing in readiness, in case a chance remained of his being restored to life, when he felt a gentle pull at the skirt of his coat, and, on looking down, he uttered a volley of joyful exclamations, on beholding the radiant countenance of Henry, whom he clasped in his arms with unutterable joy. While Martin and the boy himself, gave each his own history of the strange adventure, Sir Arthur walked up and down in a state of irrepressible irritation, clenching his teeth, and grasping his walking-stick firmly in his hand, as if about to wreak instant vengeance on the miscreants. At length, after exhausting his indignation, he took Henry again in his arms, declaring he would never for a moment lose sight of him again.

Nothing in Henry's narrative threw the smallest gleam of light on the plans or intentions of the strange man and woman, which seemed destined to remain buried in impenetrable obscurity. They had evidently been accomplices in decoying him from home; and

the boy had brought away from the steam-boat, a small book which they had given him, full of ribald songs, and profane jests, but covered with magnificent boards, and clasped with silver hinges, which seemed to have once belonged to some ancient missal, and still retained in the inside, a collection of texts beautifully written in a very remarkable hand, which seemed to be that of a highly-educated female.

For some time afterwards, several suspicious-looking people were seen lurking about Sir Arthur's premises, late at night; and one evening a shot was fired suddenly in at the drawing-room window, which passed so near to Henry's head, that his hair was actually disturbed; but though an active police had been placed on the watch, not a trace could be obtained of the authors of this outrage.

As time wore on, and the mind of Henry rapidly expanded on all subjects of classical learning and general science, the fearful and melancholy events of his early years faded considerably from his mind, while he made

astonishing progress at the excellent school where Sir Arthur placed him, exhibiting that happy, but rare combination of deep thought, and refinement of mind, with extreme liveliness of fancy, and enthusiasm of character. This threw a perfect witchery over his conversation, which sparkled with vivacity, or flowed with uncommon depth and power, as best suited the occasion, while at the same time, during his intercourse with Sir Arthur, he became imbued with the highest principles of honour and good feeling; and from his master he imbibed the most enlightened knowledge of the doctrines and duties of Christianity, with the profoundest reverence for its precepts and practice.

Sir Arthur felt a dreary blank during Henry's absence at school, which became more and more intolerable as his eyesight was at length nearly extinct; and he had serious thoughts of engaging a person to walk out with him during the day, and to read to him during the evening, being of opinion that it is the highest wisdom, as well as the

best Christianity, cheerfully to meet every appointed privation, and derive from the blessings that remain, as much enjoyment as they can afford.

Sir Arthur often remarked to his friend, Lady Towercliffe, that it is a misfortune to wear out a taste for any inoffensive occupation; and he began to fear it might be possible for him to survive his enjoyment of reading. "In my long life," he observed, "I have myself travelled all the travels described by others, thought all the thoughts, and felt all the feelings. If I read such a book as Robertson's America, for instance, the question forces itself upon me, 'what the better would I be of knowing this whole volume by heart!' The time was once, when a romance carried me off into another existence altogether, and I seemed to awaken as from a dream, when called back to the ordinary business of life; but now I can anticipate from the first page, the whole *denouement* of every novel, and never for an instant forget my own identity in reading the story."

"It is a shocking symptom of advancing years," said Lady Towercliffe. "But you must wait till I publish."

"Yet," continued Sir Arthur, "there is one volume always new, in which I never can tire of reading my own heart and character; and in the Bible, the descriptions of eastern countries are so like what I have observed myself of the scenery, customs, and manners, that they fill me with recollections and associations that are of endless interest."

No sooner had Sir Arthur mentioned incidentally, to Lady Towercliffe, and several friends, that he would willingly give a handsome salary to a person of good reading and writing abilities, than it seemed as if all the meritorious young men in Scotland happened at that very time to be looking out for precisely such a situation; and it made Sir Arthur almost melancholy in examining testimonials, which ought to have procured any one of them a bishopric, to think that so many admirable youths, of learning and talents, were ready to sacrifice themselves

for a mere home, and a pittance of L.50 per annum!

No situation ever became vacant in the memory of man, for which Lady Towercliffe had not some protégé exactly suited; and no sooner did she hear that Sir Arthur required a secretary and reader, than she wrote him a note of seven pages, closely penned, in which she made it evident that there was but one individual in the world who could suit, or ought to suit, and that one individual was the bearer of her despatch, who waited below for an answer.

It appeared that, with all her zeal in the cause, Lady Towercliffe knew very little of the young man she so vehemently recommended; but having accidentally met him in a bookseller's shop, he had been employed by her to copy some verses in an album, and she thought him, without exception, one of the most civil and grateful creatures in the world, who really deserved encouragement.

When Sir Arthur sent for Mr Howard up stairs, his kind heart was almost shocked at

the tone of wild energy, and the look of fe-verish anxiety with which he entreated that his capabilities might be tried. His figure, though youthful, was tall, gaunt, and meagre, while his care-worn countenance, which bore a stern and melancholy aspect, was lighted up by large dark flashing eyes, in which there gleamed an expression of singular excitement. He appeared young and handsome, but not prepossessing—so gloomy and determined was the expression of his firmly-compressed mouth, that it seemed almost indicative of ferocity; and his eye had that peculiarity invariably expressing evil—an impossibility of looking any one steadily in the face.

"You see me under great disadvantage, Sir Arthur; friendless, homeless, and pover-ty-struck," said Mr Howard, with a look of eager, deprecating solicitude, which spoke at once to the generous heart of the Admiral, and filled him with commiseration. "Fate and fortune have hitherto frustrated my ef-forts, and weighed me down with life-crush-ing sorrows; but only give me employment,

and I would not thank the Queen to be my cousin!"

It was a favourite saying with Sir Arthur, that he would be more ashamed to suspect mankind, than to be deceived by them; and if he had a weakness in the world, it was a total incapacity to give pain. Touched by the nervous excitement in Mr Howard's eye and manner, which he attributed entirely to his necessitous circumstances, he almost immediately engaged him, to the entire satisfaction of Lady Towercliffe, who never asked or cared any more about her protégé, gratified that she had achieved "a job," and that by her interest, and hers only, a place in the world had been filled up, which would have been occupied by some one else, perhaps equally deserving, if she had not interfered, and she was satisfied for the present, to have been of consequence to somebody, no matter whom.

Mr Howard generally spoke in a subdued, mysterious voice, as if afraid to let himself know what he was saying; yet sometimes his words came forth with a rushing impetuosity,

full of energy and fire, like lightning itself. His hollow, blood-shot eyes, betrayed a wild, watchful, suspicious expression, by no means prepossessing; and there was something inscrutable in the bland, perpetual smile he always wore upon his countenance, and in the frozen tranquillity of his manner, which occasionally, though seldom, gave way to bursts of tempestuous emotion. The very pupils of his eyes seemed to become darker, with a fearfully wild and ferocious expression when irritated, while the fierce fire flashed out from beneath his lowering brows, with a blaze of inexpressible fury; yet in a moment he could command himself again into a cold, calm, and almost haughty exterior, while the spectral paleness of his handsome countenance, made him look like marble itself.

Years passed on, during which Sir Arthur endured, rather than enjoyed, Mr Howard's attendance, whose pre-occupied air and vague manner, continually annoyed him; but his benevolent heart shrunk from consigning the poor man to that hopeless and solitary want

which he seemed to apprehend must inevitably follow the loss of his present situation, and from day to day he postponed the decision, till habit grew into second nature, and he became so accustomed to hear "The Times," column after column, spouted forth in a rather theatrical tone by his reader, and to dictate notes and letters to his very silent and diligent secretary, that he almost forgot at last to think of parting with him.

When Henry returned for the first time from school, six or seven months after Mr Howard had become domesticated at Portobello, the secretary professed a vehement fancy for the boy, would fetch and carry for him like a tame dog, and loaded him with attentions; yet, though in general most affectionately grateful to all who showed him even a trifling kindness, these assiduities and flatteries were lavished upon him in vain. The boy shrunk instinctively from Mr Howard's notice, but could assign no other reason to himself or to others for this apparently unreasonable antipathy, except merely that the

stranger resembled somebody he had seen before, but how, when, or where, not a trace remained in his memory. This little caprice did not appear to be noticed or resented by the secretary, till one day, when Henry refused some bon-bons which Mr Howard offered him, saying, the last he accepted had made him sick, and when the boy soon after flew gayly out of the room, Marion was for a moment startled and surprised to observe the malignant scowl with which the eye of Mr Howard followed Henry. It was a glance, fell and malignant, that feared to be seen, while his cheek became pale as death, but whether in anger or in sorrow, Marion thought it impossible to divine.

As Henry grew older, his instinctive dread of Mr Howard seemed only to increase, but he was too considerate to disturb the tranquillity of Sir Arthur by mentioning it, or to injure the poor man himself, by giving way to a feeling of dislike so unaccountable, and yet so perfectly unconquerable; but at length, after many years of such prudent self-restraint,

when nearly grown up to manhood, he could not help saying one day, in a careless tone, to the Admiral, after witnessing a sudden outbreak of temper in Mr Howard that morning,

"Your secretary always reminds me, Sir Arthur, of Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea. It seems impossible to get handsomely rid of him, and he will never certainly make a voluntary departure!"

"I fear not!" replied the Admiral, with something between a smile and a sigh. "He does all I desire him, but without interest or pleasure, and he has the most undisguised contempt for every living being, almost amounting to hatred, yet he expresses unbounded gratitude for being harboured in my house. What can I do? It would be cruel to kick the man out of doors, merely because he is unhappy; but I have often observed, Henry, that he is no favourite of yours, though that is the only subject on which you have never been entirely open with me."

"Because I am heartily ashamed of my

feelings, Sir Arthur, and you are the last person on earth to whom I wish to tell anything against myself. You have told me there are people with a loathing antipathy to cats, and somewhat similar is the shuddering sensation with which I see your worthy secretary enter the room. A sort of shiver comes over me, and a wish to keep him off,—to avoid his very glance and touch. He has a strange under-look certainly! His smile makes me shudder! and yet the feeling is quite undefinable! They say dogs and children have an instinctive liking or antipathy to those who secretly like or hate them, and perhaps my sensation is on somewhat similar grounds.

"There is something fearful in the eye of Mr Howard, occasionally, when I catch it fixed upon myself," added Henry rapidly, but in a sort of musing absent under-tone, while his voice acquired a deeper tinge of thought, "I seem to have beheld him once in a dream! When he looks at me in that strange and extraordinary manner, his eyes like the flickering glare of light in a gloomy cavern, I feel

and know that at some period in my life I have seen such a countenance before! The time and place have escaped me, but the remembrance is painful, and in his presence I cannot but be convinced that I am in the presence of an enemy. It is a feeling I can neither drive away, nor distinctly realize!"

"Why did you never tell me this before Henry?" asked the Admiral, rising with agitation. "He has been hardly dealt with by fortune, but surely you do not think ——

——."

"Think!! ——; I think nothing, Sir Arthur, for I know nothing, and I ought not to have spoken as I have done,—it was wrong and rash. I shall try to conquer this,—to conquer myself,—and, as they say, acquired tastes are always the strongest, I may yet learn to like Mr Howard better than any one living; but, in the mean time, Sir Arthur, he does occasionally look to me, very like some stray member of the Lunatic Asylum!"

"I sometimes think," said Sir Arthur, "that Howard has a bee in his bonnet."

"He has a whole hive of bees in his bonnet!" replied Henry in his usual off-hand tone; but when he looked round, as is usual. when people are spoken of, the individual himself, Mr Howard, stood before him. A mortal paleness had overspread his countenance, contending emotions seemed flitting across his lowering brow, like shifting clouds in a threatening sky, and his eyes gleamed upon young De Lancey with a look of maniacal fury; but the same artificial smile was on his lips which he habitually assumed, while, in the blandest voice of courtesy he turned from the steady penetrating gaze of Henry to Sir Arthur, saying, in a tone of servile cunning, but with a smile the most ghastly that was ever seen on a human face,

"Every fool can find fault, but my livelihood fortunately depends not on any boyish caprice. It is derived from the generosity of a noble mind, unbiassed by cruel and unfounded prejudices, which may, however, yet be my ruin. A small leak sinks a great ship, and even you, my benefactor, may

hereafter be influenced by the opinion of one who avowedly hates me, though without cause,—I should have little to dread if he were like you, but then who is? Come what may, however, you deserve and shall ever retain my undying gratitude and attachment. I have met with little kindness in life, and am never likely to forget that little, from whatever benevolent heart it comes. In this bleak, desolate, most harsh and cruel world, you are now my only friend."

"Those who have deserved friends, Mr Howard, are seldom so entirely destitute of them!" said Sir Arthur, with a certain tone of interrogation in his voice, for he abhorred the slightest approach to flattery, and always had an instinctive apprehension that it was accompanied by deceit. "We are too ready often to throw the blame upon human nature, when our own individual nature is to blame. For my own part, I have met with little unkindness or ingratitude hitherto, and would willingly look upon the sunny side of life, hoping all things, and believing all things, of

mankind in general, and of yourself among the number."

The darkened sight of Sir Arthur prevented his perceiving that in the countenance of Mr Howard there flitted a quick succession of emotions, fiery and vivid as summer lightning, but Henry observed with astonishment the powerful though ineffectual efforts he made to control his agitation. His hands were clenched, till the very blood seemed ready to spring; he gnawed his nether lip with frightful vehemence, and his eyes shot fire from beneath his dark and frowning brow. With a glance of unspeakable malevolence at Henry, and a hurried bow to Sir Arthur, he hastened with rapid steps out of the room, and subsequently out of the house.

"If there be a madman out of bedlam, Sir Arthur, that is he!" exclaimed Henry, following with his eyes the rushing steps of Howard, as he crossed the garden. "Before I go to college, let me hope you will dismiss him. Give the poor man a trifling pension, or do any thing for him, rather than trust

yourself in his hands, for I am mistaken, indeed, if he is not a bad and dangerous man."

"Before you return here, I may perhaps be able to find some other situation for him; but he has done nothing yet, Henry, to forfeit my protection, and I scarcely think he would live, if I dismissed him. He has drunk a bitter cup of wretchedness, and without principle or hope, he has more than hinted to me, that death itself will be his resource if I turn him adrift. It was a well-meant officiousness of Lady Towercliffe to force him upon my good offices, and I cannot yet see any easy way to relieve myself of the charge, without causing more distress than I can reconcile myself to occasioning."

"He is certainly a strange mysterious being," replied Henry, wishing to turn off a subject which he saw was agitating Sir Arthur with perplexity; "but Mr Howard is not probably the only man on earth whom in the course of my existence I shall not be able to comprehend."

CHAPTER VI.

She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleam'd upon my sight,
A lovely apparition sent,
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight too her dusky hair,
But all things else about her drawn,
From May-time, and the cheerful dawn,
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

THE most popular girl at Mrs Penfold's "Seminary for Young Ladies," near Edinburgh, was Marion Dunbar, too much loved by her companions to be envied; admired by all, and almost idolized by each, while beneath the gay, sparkling surface of her joyous disposition, there rolled on a warm current of

sensibility and feeling sufficient to repay, and more than repay, all the deep tenderness and enthusiastic affection she excited among the little circle of her young and ardent friends.

Cast in the finest mould of classical beauty, and formed mentally as well as personally in the very poetry of nature, the perfect grace and symmetry of her features became enlivened frequently by an arch and radiant smile, like a Hebe, glowing with the richest hues of health and joy. Her splendid eyes sparkled with every passing emotion, sometimes dimmed for a moment by tears of sensibility, but usually glittering with smiles, while occasionally, when amused or delighted, she burst into a comic elfish laugh, the very essence of glee and joyousness,—a most enlivening accompaniment to what she said, while her conversation, always fresh and unpremeditated, rushed straight from her heart, fresh and natural as a mountain stream.

The colour of a violet was not more deeply blue than the dark unfathomable eyes of Marion, shaded by a fringe of eye-lashes that

might have been mistaken for black. No description could do justice to the fascination of her smile, without one shade of affectation, while her pure transparent complexion, fresh as a bouquet of roses, took a richer tint from all the flitting emotions which chased each other through her mind. A rich profusion of nut-brown hair played around her high arched forehead of alabaster whiteness, and a thousand laughing dimples quivered around her delicately-formed mouth, giving her a merry, joyous look of girlish beauty, varied occasionally by a melting softness of expression when she looked in any countenance that she loved. On one occasion, a celebrated sculptor asked Sir Patrick's permission to take a cast of Marion's head, and on obtaining the desired permission, he observed, that if those features could be turned into marble, he would stake his whole fame on the impossibility of any critic pointing out a single defect. But while admiration is given by the eye of an artist merely to symmetry, expression is the mystery of beauty; and the charm

of Marion, in the estimation of her friends, was, that her face seemed like a mirror formed to reflect every emotion of their own hearts.

The most stern and morose of human beings must have been conciliated into some degree of regard, by the deep tenderness of a character "without one jarring atom form'd," which seemed made only to love and to be loved. While her gay fancy revelled in "cheerful yesterdays and confident to-morrows," the flowers that grew around her path, the birds that sang as she passed, the very turf beneath her feet, and the sky above her head, called forth her feelings. She had a tear to spare for the sorrows of every one who claimed her sympathy, and a ready smile for the joys of all her companions, while yet a great deal of unoccupied love remained at her disposal, the chief portion of which was bestowed with prodigal enthusiasm on her indulgent uncle Sir Arthur, whose doting affection would have spoiled any other disposition, but only rendered her more keenly do-

sirous to merit, and to preserve his partiality.

In the estimation of Sir Arthur, his "little Marion" never became a day older, and he considered her a perfect prodigy in every thing she said or did, watching all her words, and entering into all her juvenile feelings with a versatility of mind astonishing at his advanced age. Nothing on earth is more touching than to see the warmth of sensibility and enthusiasm yet surviving the chill of many a year in this disappointing and sorrowful world; but there was a degree of mutual confidence between Sir Arthur and his young niece, which can seldom exist with a disparity of years and circumstances. Besides all her feminine gentleness, and almost poetical gracefulness of character, Marion yet displayed at times a power of intellect, and an energetic strength of character, for which a superficial observer would have been totally unprepared; for her mind seemed always to rise in proportion to the occasion, while she had been born apparently to practise without.

reserve, that beautiful Christian rule, for each individual always to consider himself last. Rarely are deep feelings, and intense sensibility united with that high intelligence of mind, and that vivid gladness of spirit peculiar to Marion; but the stream of her mind was deep as well as sparkling, while during her early years sorrow flitted through her cheerful, laughter-loving mind, like the shadow of a butterfly in a bright sunny flower-bed. Pleased "she knew not why, and car'd not wherefore," there was a peculiar grace in all she did, and an infectious merriment in all she said, which attracted a joyous group of gay companions continually around her, on whom the light of her own buoyant vivacity seemed to be continually and brightly reflected.

Nothing could be more pleasing and characteristic than to observe the refined ingenuity with which, from the earliest age, Marion tried to evade receiving the multitude of little presents with which it was Sir Arthur's delight to surprise her. Trinkets

and toys would have multiplied around her, if she had not frequently made an ostentation of possessing more than it was possible for her to use, and when Sir Arthur allowed her a choice, in any gift he was about to force on her acceptance, she invariably selected that which seemed least expensive; and her uncle afterwards told, that when, on the twelfth anniversary of her birth-day, he clasped a beautiful Maltese chain round her neck, she said to him with a deepening colour and faltering voice, "I would like better to love you for nothing, uncle Arthur! My drawer up stairs is like a jeweller's shop already. You know I inherited half dear mamma's ornaments, and Patrick says you bring Rundell and Bridge in your pocket every time I have a holiday, but I would be quite as happy to see you all for yourself."

The merry-eyed Marion seemed to "wear her heart upon her sleeve," and to see only what was best in all those with whom she associated. With her small means, it was truly astonishing how frequently and ingeni-

ously she invented some unobtrusive way of conferring a favour on her companions, as if she were receiving rather than bestowing one, and it certainly appeared as if she scarcely knew the difference. There was not an individual among her numerous young contemporaries, who did not often relate traits of goodness in one whom they always found ready to answer the largest drafts that could be drawn upon her good offices, while the cheerfulness of her mind reflected itself on all.

If one of her young friends rushed joyously forward to announce some unexpected success, Marion's features seemed as if they had been put together only for smiles and laughter, while her bright eye glittered with instant gladness, and a glow of colour mounted to her dimpling cheek, as she felt and expressed with spontaneous warmth all that kindness could dictate, —— and more; —— but if some unforeseen affliction visited the hearts of her juvenile associates, there seemed no limits to the patience with which she listened to their complaints, or to the eager assiduity

with which she endeavoured to alleviate their sorrow. The most trifling attentions she never overlooked, were it merely the tying of a string, or the picking up of a handkerchief, which she did with a good-humoured grace all her own, and the trifling actions of life are those by which the character can generally be most justly appreciated. Great achievements are a conspicuous embroidery laid on the surface often for effect, but the ground-work and material are formed of what is most unobtrusive and often scarcely noticed. With Marion, every kind and generous feeling was as natural as perfume to the violet, and equally inseparable from her daily existence; her ideas were fresh and vivid, while her manner was thoroughly fascinating and thoroughly feminine, at the same time that all the grace of look and expression added a surpassing charm to her lively and intelligent conversation, every word of which sprang from the spontaneous impulse of a heart full of natural emotion and straightforward sentiments.

Many a difficult exercise she had secretly

assisted to write for her young contemporaries, many an unintelligible drawing she had touched up, many a dress she had privately mended, many a little debt she had clandestinely paid for her juvenile friends, and far from wishing to be thanked, she shrunk with modest sensibility from letting her services be over-estimated, even by those whom she had most exerted herself to oblige. Whenever a kindness had been privately done at school, the author of which could not be guessed at nor discovered, few hesitated to declare that it must have proceeded from Marion Dunbar, and none were ever mistaken in saying so.

It was indeed wonderful that the lovely and gay young school-girl found time for a tenth part of her kind and tender affections, at Mrs Penfold's first-rate seminary for what Sir Arthur called "fiddle-faddle education." There no taste was inculcated for quiet pursuits or domestic intercourse, and it was one of Mrs Penfold's favourite axioms, that nature is always vulgar; but in her zeal for the ho-

nour of her establishment she seemed resolute to make every pupil an Admirable Crichton, —or more,—not in studying the experience of past ages, and reading the thoughts and feelings which have been recorded for their instruction by millions of the best and wisest of their predecessors in life, but in all the frivolities of existence; and to this end the pupils were stinted in sleep and food, while they pursued a course of application more incessant, though not so profound, as that of students for a double first class at Oxford. The most eminent masters were in hourly attendance to cultivate every thing but the heart or understanding. The various arts of killing or of wasting time were taught in perfection, by the best, or at least by the most fashionable teachers; and, as the Admiral disapprovingly remarked to her brother, "little Marion was surrounded by professors of every thing on earth,—by professors of trumpery in all its branches, but by no professors of common sense!"

With Mrs Penfold each pupil was a favou-

rite in exact proportion as she appeared likely to acquire a talent for the difficult art of rising in the world, by which she might reflect credit and celebrity on the theatre of her education; and it seemed, therefore, by no means intended as an expression of kindness, when that lady was heard one day impatiently to exclaim in accents of reproach, "Marion Dunbar is all heart and no head! Some girls do nothing, but she does less than nothing; and though she gets on in years, she gets on in no other thing!"

Wearily busied in being taught, Marion yet felt that there was one incitement, and one only, which made every effort a pleasure, while it gave life to the dull routine of her heartless labours, and that incitement was her fervent, incessant desire to please, not the dictate of vanity, but of spontaneous sensibility; and while, with her bright and beaming looks, she was by no means a prodigy, Marion very much under-rated her own powers, believing, in the simplicity of her heart, that she really was the most hopeless dunce on

many subjects, only able to recommend herself by diligence and by alacrity to oblige.

Even Mrs Penfold was disarmed of half her severity, by the eagerness with which Marion, buoyant with youth, and joyous as a bird on wing, undertook any task, or suffered any penance to compensate for such little *etourderies* as had caused her to be in temporary disgrace; and the stern schoolmistress herself could not but smile sometimes in the midst of her gravest lecture, to observe the look of extreme anxiety and self-reproach with which Marion listened to the catalogue of her small indiscretions, and the grateful joy with which she heard that there were any terms on which she might yet be restored to favour. Caroline Smythe, her most frolicsome companion, frequently amused herself by inventing imaginary scrapes into which Marion was supposed to have fallen, and by sending her express to Mrs Penfold for a reprimand, while the lively girl watched, in laughing ambuscade, for the bright beaming smile which flashed into the supposed culprit's counte-

nance, the instant she unexpectedly found herself honourably acquitted.

Thus the foundation of Marion's mind was laid, and these were the light breezes that ruffled the smooth current of her life; but enchanted by the slightest pleasures, few ever bore the burden of her annoyances so lightly, while a brilliant painted curtain hung over the future, filled with images of anticipated joy, to be realised in all their brightness and beauty, as soon as she became emancipated from the dreary thraldom of Mrs Penfold's manufactory of young ladies.

Meantime, Marion's mind grew and flourished, like some rare and beautiful plant injudiciously cultivated, yet glowing in almost unprecedented luxuriance. Plunged in this inextricable labyrinth of educational troubles, she had to undergo lessons from sun-rise till sun-set, while all the varied arts, sciences, and languages were piled promiscuously on her brain, like an ill-grown coppice, distorted and stunted for want of more judicious thinning and training. She could name things in

every language, but was told nothing of their nature and properties; while, as Sir Arthur complained, "poor little Marion was taught plenty of sound, but no sound sense, except what she had inherited by nature, without paying £100 a-year for it."

In music Marion displayed great taste and expression, while her flexible, richly-toned voice poured out sometimes a flood of harmony most exquisite to hear, as the pathos of her full round intonations drew forth the feeling and sympathy of all her auditors. Expression in music is like expression of countenance, not to be taught or acquired, but the spontaneous result of natural emotion, and with Marion music was almost a passion, for her whole spirit seemed instinct with melody, while her lark-like voice trilled its liquid notes with joyful hilarity.

Signiors and Signioras, who might have fitted their pupils to become chorus-singers at the opera, were multiplied around the young ladies at Mrs Penfold's "College of Frivolity," followed in ceaseless succession by Mes-

sieurs and Mesdames, who taught the young ladies to maltreat pianofortes, by playing on them at the rate of 100 miles an hour, or to speak foreign languages better than the natives, and to write them better than they could write their own:—

> While hands, lips, and eyes were put to school,
> And each instructed feature had its rule.

On Sunday evenings, for the sake of effect, the girls were regularly assembled to prayers, which were conducted like those of Frederick the Great's soldiers, being performed simultaneously at the word of command as a part of their exercise, without a semblance of reverence, and within a very limited number of minutes, while they were hastily slurred over by Mrs Penfold herself, with scarcely an external aspect of solemnity or interest. Sunday had long been considered by all the pupils at Mrs Penfold's as a privileged day for writing letters, wearing best bonnets, peeping from behind a red-silk curtain at the congregation, criticising the clergyman's man-

ner, dress, and appearance, discussing, in suppressed whispers, who it would be possible or impossible for them to think of marrying, and enjoying rather a longer walk than common in strolling to church and returning again.

Any knowledge of the Bible inculcated at Mrs Penfold's, was like all the other acquirements taught in that establishment, more for show than use. Each young pupil could repeat by heart, without hesitation or mistake, the whole history of Jacob, Abraham, and any of the patriarchs, prophets, or apostles, and enumerate all the kings who ever reigned over Israel, but they remained utterly uninstructed respecting the influence which the Divine revelation should obtain over their own life and character, nor were they ever taught to inquire what was their own nature, why they were placed upon the earth, and whither they were likely to go after this perishable world had passed from their sight. Summer-flowers alone were implanted in their minds, but no thoughts, hopes, or affections, such as may last for winter wear. To them

their birth seemed merely to have been the commencement of an existence, given entirely for their own individual pleasure or advantage, which was finally to terminate at their death.

Before Marion had been long at school, however, she formed an intimacy which produced a permanent and most happy effect on all her subsequent life and feelings. Clara Granville, several years older than herself, had been nurtured, like her brother, in holiness, and in every domestic excellence, while she lived only for the dictates of a chastened and sanctified heart. Delicate in health, and fragile in extreme to appearance, there was something almost seraphic in the delicate purity of her lovely countenance, and in the tranquil composure of her graceful manner. During a long and tedious illness, with which Clara was seized, a short time before leaving school, she testified a tender and almost exclusive affection for Marion, who spent all her leisure hours,—or rather moments, for hours were scarce at Mrs Penfold's,—in the most assiduous

attention to the beloved invalid, and in imbibing those elements of good, those feelings and principles of religion which were to be guides of all her future life, and thus she became, before long, an enlightened, well informed, and deeply pious Christian, not shrinking from the society of one who excelled herself, but humbly and gratefully seeking, on all occasions, her advice and instruction, while both had their hearts filled with a fervent desire, steadily and consistently to pursue their own best interests, and an anxious wish also to succour and benefit others, in all the troubles and sorrows of life, though Marion was apt to feel like the poet,

> Ready to aid all beings, I would go
> The world around to succour human woe,
> Yet am so largely happy, that it seems,
> There are no woes, and sorrows are but dreams.

Marion's health and spirits were refreshed and invigorated by frequent excursions to visit Sir Arthur, who endeared himself to his eager young auditors, Henry and Marion, by expatiating with all the freshness of youth, to their

wondering ears, on the times long past, when holidays, romping, sight-seeing, birthdays, and festivals, were still in fashion, but these were the days of his own boyhood, before children were too wise and busy to have time for natural enjoyment. The Admiral was thought, by Mrs Penfold, a sad marplot, having already, as she knew, done all in his power to dissuade Sir Patrick from placing the "little fairy," as he called his favourite, in such a tread-mill as her school-room, where he said the only knowledge to be acquired was, that knowledge of the world which ruins the heart, and where fascination was to be taught as one of the fine arts, but all his representations, whether in jest or in earnest, were vain. Sir Patrick, being the guardian of both his sisters, had determined to expend a considerable part of the provision bequeathed by their father in training them up as carefully, for the course of fashionable life, as he would have trained a promising race-horse which was expected to win the St Leger, confidently anticipating a short

and brilliant career of admiration and success, ending with a splendid trousseau, a chariot and four, and a profusion of wedding favours.

Even the gay, frolicsome Caroline Smythe, many years older than Marion, and the most unruly and seditious of pupils, became speedily tamed down to mechanical obedience at school, where, losing her naturally intense enjoyment of mere existence, she seemed at best almost a habitual drudge in the usual routine of labour. There was a mystery never apparently to be fathomed about this lively girl, which excited the most intense curiosity among her companions, but though she was gifted with an extraordinary degree of apparently heedless volubility, which astonished and diverted the whole school, talking in a rapid, irregular manner of all events, past, present, or to come, with a brilliant confusion of drollery and humour, still she never dropped a hint which threw the most transient light on her own situation and affairs. No one knew whence she came, or who she was, but though

defying all the powers of all the masters to render her accomplished, yet Mrs Penfold evidently treated her with extraordinary consideration, and almost with respect.

Many were the restrictions and directions given respecting her to the scholars and teachers, which seemed to them most unaccountable, and several of which were voted by the juvenile community to be so peculiarly barbarous and oppressive, that though the young lady herself seemed neither surprised nor annoyed by the rigid watchfulness exercised over all her motions, it excited among her companions an indignant pity, and a keen spirit of partizanship. She was never on any occasion known to walk with the governesses and the other girls beyond the narrow limits of the high garden walls, and on Sundays, instead of attending the parish church, it was observed with surprise that one of the teachers invariably remained at home to read prayers with her. No general invitations sent for all the pupils by the friends of other girls, were ever accepted for Caroline, who had special per-

mission to visit with Marion at Sir Arthur Dunbar's, but at no other house in the visible world.

She never spoke of home,—received no letters, and once only had a visitor, an object of keen and eager scrutiny to the little gossiping community of Dartmore House, who discovered nothing more, however, than that Caroline's aunt, Mrs Smythe, was a gay fantastic-looking showily-dressed little woman of no certain age, for whom her niece seemed to care very little, as the whole flood of her affections was concentrated on her companions at school. Money she had in the most lavish abundance, while she squandered it with a degree of reckless, and almost contemptuous profusion, perfectly startling to those who scarcely received as much in a year as she seemed able to spend in a day on presents for those she loved, which was the chief use to which her large funds were devoted.

Marion, the companion and the pet of her two elder companions, Clara and Caroline, tried with all her powers to extend her affec-

tion also to Mrs Penfold, but her feelings found nothing to feed upon in the cold, formal, rigid manner, and stern upright appearance of the schoolmistress, who repelled all intercourse with her pupils, considering them necessary grievances to be endured in her house, as a source of existence to herself, but not of pleasure. Towards these little slaves of education, driven from task to task with ceaseless pertinacity, no confidence was shown, and between them conversation became systematically discouraged. A governess was appointed to sleep in each room to secure silence among the pupils, few of whom had that glow of heart and imagination peculiar to Marion, and it was fortunate, perhaps, that her large stock of sympathy was not more frequently in requisition, as the most astounding confidences were sometimes imparted to her wondering ears.

One young lady, in a high fever of romance, described to Marion at great length, in the strictest confidence, an elopement which took place from the school where she had last

been educated, on which occasion the young narrator had accompanied the bride part of her way, and returned home without detection, by climbing in at an open window. Another of the pupils asked if she did not think Monsieur D'Ambereau, the Italian master, wore singularly handsome mustachios, adding, that it was a very common custom now for noblemen to go about in disguise, teaching at boarding-schools, in order to see the young ladies; and a third of Marion's young friends pointed out to her notice, that many a ringlet appeared to be more carefully curled than usual, and many a dress to be put on with unwonted solicitude, when Monsieur Frescati, the singing-master, was expected.

Girls in a boarding-school are as unnaturally situated as nuns in a convent, where the feelings and emotions, being checked in their spontaneous course, are thrust into channels for which they never were originally intended. Marion had a sufficient object in view, every time she entered a room, from the desire she felt to please all with whom she associated,

which gave a vent to the warmth of her affections in seeking the reciprocal attachment of her companions; but many of the other pupils, shut out from nature with her sunshine and flowers, her feelings and emotions, and wearied by a monotonous, uneventful life of dictionaries and grammars, snatched at every legitimate or illegitimate source of novelty or excitement, and their conversation became as frivolous as a toyshop, while the hopeless vacancy of their thoughts obtained relief if even a blind fiddler or a hand-organ appeared beneath their windows. It was an object of romantic interest for the day, to most of the girls, if an officer in uniform passed along the high-road within sight; an equestrian in plain clothes, if tolerably mounted, furnished them with a subject for exclamations during the following half-hour, and even the very Doctor, a mere country pill-box, who prescribed for Mrs Penfold's pupils, being well-dressed, and not much above forty, would himself have been astonished could he possibly have guessed the interest excited by

his visits, and the keen discussion which ensued after his exit, respecting his slightly grey hair, and brilliant yellow gloves.

Each young lady at school had a large assortment of romantic stories to relate, in a confidential under-tone, to her listening companions, of lovers who had committed suicide, gone mad, or been at the very least rendered miserable for life in consequence of a disappointed attachment, while the whole party impatiently anticipated the time, not perhaps far distant, when their own turn would come to be idolized, admired, courted, and finally married to some "perfect love," with title, fortune. and establishment all pre-eminently superlative. Pure as the swan that passes through the darkest and most turbid stream with plumage unsoiled, Marion's mind in the mean time remained untainted by the atmosphere of evil and frivolity around her. She caught at all that seemed good, avoided what was evil, and rejected every thought that might injure the unsophisticated excellence of her artless mind.

There arose, however, in time, one source of individual anxiety to Marion, known only to herself and Mrs Penfold, but it increased in weight and urgency every year, throwing occasionally a shadow of care over that bright young countenance, in general so beaming with joy, though with true philosophy Marion tried often to forget what it had proved impossible for her to remedy. Once a-quarter, or at least during every successive "half," the mortifying fact forced itself upon her observation, that no bills were so irregularly paid as her own, for while their amount rapidly accumulated, Sir Patrick's agent forwarded annually the very smallest instalments, with a thousand apologies, and many promises of a final satisfactory settlement at some future period, which period never seemed any nearer; and Mrs Penfold often dryly remarked, in the hearing of Marion, that "short accounts make long friends."

An appeal to Sir Arthur for his interference, occasionally suggested itself to the

mind of Marion, but she knew that his influence was less than nothing, and she greatly feared lest his vehement partiality to herself might lead him to overlook the very limited nature of his own income, and to volunteer some generous sacrifice, such as she would rather suffer any privations than occasion. The pension and half-pay of Sir Arthur very barely sufficed, she knew, to defray his extensive charities, and to furnish sometimes the hospitable table, and the bottle of first-rate claret, round which it was his delight to gather a frequent circle of old brother admirals; but his purse was little calculated to stand the shock of such a draft as Sir Patrick would unhesitatingly have drawn upon it, had the idea occurred to him that Sir Arthur might perhaps be induced to take Marion's school bills upon himself.

In no instance was it more obvious than in that of Sir Patrick Dunbar, how precisely in society men are generally estimated at their own valuation. He was, like his sisters, pre-eminently handsome, while the hauteur of his



demeanour, bordering on a sort of well-bred contempt for others, rendered his slightest notice an event of considerable magnitude even to many whom the world might have deemed his superiors in rank, fortune, and talents. There were a few exclusives, however, among his own exclusive set, whom he admitted to the most unbounded familiarity and good fellowship, inviting them to entertainments, given much more as an ostentatious display of wealth and taste, than from any feeling that might be dignified with the name of friendship, and thus by a reckless and unbounded profusion in dress, equipage, and hospitality, unchecked by one sentiment of justice or of prudence, the young Baronet obtained universal celebrity for his generosity and good-humour,—anecdotes of which were circulated with delighted approbation in every house.

He was known to have tossed a sovereign one day to an old woman at a cottage door, for merely reaching him a glass of water; he paid the post-boys double always,

when travelling; he gave ten pounds at a ladies' bazaar, for a paper card-case, which he presented the next moment to Clara Granville; and he sent Marion a magnificent rosewood box, filled with crystal perfume-bottles, and gold tops, which cost L.20, when at that very time she had scarcely a frock to put on, and was in agonies of vexation over an unpaid shoemaker's bill.

Sir Patrick's grooms and footmen always roundly estimated his income at L.20,000 a-year, and his rent-roll certainly exceeded that of all the parents united, who paid Mrs Penfold regularly for cramming their children's understandings; but while Sir Patrick made it a matter of accurate calculation, to train Marion with skill and sagacity in the way most likely to take her speedily off his hands, yet it was no part of his calculation to pay for any thing in money, if he could do so in words, and while he rattled off whole estates in a dice-box, and raced himself into difficulties, entering horses for every cup, and dogs for every coursing-match, he privately re-

solved that Marion and her embarrassments should always remain both out of sight and out of mind.

Mrs Penfold's grave and dry expression of countenance, became graver and drier every time she contemplated the rapidly increasing amount of Marion's bill, while she urgently impressed on her pupil's mind the absolute necessity of entreating more zealously than ever for the speedy payment of such very old scores.

Observing Sir Patrick so exceedingly profuse in his expenditure, however, Mrs Penfold believed there could be no cause to apprehend any defalcation at last, being convinced that he might at any time defray her demands with ease, though the only thing he never found it convenient to command, was ready money; and Marion soon discovered that it made him frantic with ill humour to be asked for any. Of this peculiarity she had once an early instance, never afterwards to be forgotten. Having received from Sir Arthur, on her fifteenth birth-day, the first

five sovereigns which it had ever been her good fortune to possess, she accidentally heard Sir Patrick laughingly complain during her midsummer holidays at home, to Mr De Crespigny, that he had arrived at the bank that morning, too late to present a draft for money, and having given his last shilling to a beggar, he was, according to his own expression, "completely cleaned out," not having enough even to pay for being admitted to the exhibition of pictures, and actually put to some temporary inconvenience by his penniless condition for that day.

In all the pride of exhaustless wealth, Marion soon after stole up to her brother's side, and displayed her glittering treasure; but afraid to be suspected of conferring a favour, with intuitive delicacy she asked Sir Patrick to take charge of it until the following Saturday, that she might consider what to purchase on that day. Scarcely conscious of what she said or did, the young baronet mechanically dropped the sovereigns into his pocket, where sovereigns in general had a

very short reign, and soon after sauntered away to the club.

Day after day elapsed, week after week, and every time Sir Patrick entered the room, or drew out his pocket handkerchief, Marion thought she was on the eve of being paid; but at length her holidays came to a close, and still not a syllable transpired respecting her funds. Rendered desperate at last by anxiety to re-enter school, laden with presents to her favourite companions, Marion, who valued money only as a means of being kind to others, ventured one day, with glowing cheeks, and faultering voice, to remind Sir Patrick, for the first time, of their little pecuniary transaction, which was so very trifling that he had probably forgotten it.

"You tiresome little dear! am I never to hear the last of those sovereigns!" exclaimed he angrily, throwing down his newspaper. "You deserve not to be paid till Christmas! —— But here they are! —— No! I have no change, I see, at present. Well! I shall remember it some other time!"

That "other time" never came, however, and Marion returned penniless to school, sympathizing more fully than she had ever done before, in Mrs Penfold's lamentations respecting Sir Patrick's carelessness about money,—a subject which supplied that lady with a ready-made excuse, whenever she was out of humour at any rate, for venting it all on her unoffending pupil, whose sensitive heart became so imbued at last with vexation and anxiety, that on attaining the age of sixteen, she ventured to pen an earnest appeal to Sir Patrick, begging with all the eloquence of natural feeling, that if the expenses of her education were inconvenient, she might return home, where she would willingly shew all the benefit derived from the advantages he had already afforded her, by continuing her studies alone, and by devoting herself entirely to his comfort, amusement, and happiness.

This letter, which cost Marion agonies of thought, and a shower of tears, received no answer whatever; and with a sigh of unwont-

ed depression, she dismissed the subject from her thoughts, and trying to hope the best, quietly resumed the course of her occupations, comforted by the consolatory reflection, that in two years she would have nothing more to learn—the whole range of human acquirement being supposed to attain its completion by each of Mrs Penfold's pupils at the age of eighteen.

Clara Granville, and Caroline Smythe, having attained the highest acme of perfection under the finishing hand of Mrs Penfold, were about to be emancipated in a few months from the thraldom of school, and to astonish society by their brilliant acquirements; respecting the most advantageous mode of displaying which, great pains had been taken to instruct them, though the inclination seemed wanting in both girls, being already surfeited with admiration and panegyric among their masters and governesses, who vied with each other in praising their two most advanced pupils, by whose influence they hoped hereafter to obtain recommendations and employment.

Marion had strolled one evening with Caroline, farther than Miss Smythe had ever been known to venture before; and the two young friends were seated in an arbour at the extreme verge of the bounds prescribed by Mrs Penfold, in earnest conversation, while watching with delight the declining sun, which superbly illuminated a heavy mass of clouds in the western horizon. Time flew on, and darkness nearly closed around them, while they discussed with lively, careless humour, all the petty annoyances of their daily life, and compared the little hopes and fears they entertained for the future. As the hour became later, Marion felt that the high exhilarating key in which Caroline spoke, and her gay, well-rung-out laugh, made her almost nervous in the obscure and solitary retreat to which they had withdrawn; but ashamed of her own timidity, she determined to conquer or conceal it.

Marion was flattered when a companion like Caroline, some years older than herself, thus treated her with familiarity; though

certainly, neither on this occasion, nor on any other, was it with confidence, as no living being seemed entirely in the confidence of Miss Smythe, who, while she appeared gayly and heedlessly to rattle on in conversation, yet kept a cautious silence respecting all that concerned herself.

Many very reserved persons pass for being perfectly open, by means of a frank, free manner, and by speaking in a confidential tone concerning the most private affairs of those with whom they converse; and this Caroline did to excess, asking Marion, with every appearance of kindness, a hundred questions, which in her own case she either could not, or would not have answered, and testifying the most cordial, unfeigned interest in all that related to the prospects or feelings of her companion, who never attempted to conceal a wish or a thought, and often forgot that the trust was not mutual.

Caroline was talking eagerly with great animation, and telling Marion that the only injury she never would forgive, was, if any of

those she loved had a sorrow they did not allow her to share with them; and especially if they permitted themselves to suffer from any pecuniary difficulties which it was within her power to relieve, when suddenly Marion laid a hand on her arm, making a hurried signal for silence, while she whispered in a low undertone,

"I have scarcely heard you for the last five minutes. Did you observe that strange-looking man, very much muffled up, who scrambled several minutes ago to the top of the garden-wall? He was staring wildly about him for some time, then glided noiselessly down, and has suddenly disappeared?"

"Where? where?" whispered Caroline, grasping Marion's hand with a look of wild alarm, and speaking in a low hoarse tone of extreme terror. "For your life, Marion, do not stir! Tell me which way he went? He must not see us. O how on earth has he traced me out!"

"Who?" asked Marion, bewildered and terrified, when she beheld a degree of frantic

alarm depicted on the countenance of her companion, which seemed almost unaccountable. "Dear Caroline! whom do you fear?"

"A madman!" replied Miss Smythe, in accents of mingled anger and disgust. "He has haunted me for years! He threatens either to murder or to marry me; and you may guess which I think the worst! He has even adopted my name! Did you never hear, Marion, that he actually put his marriage to me last year in the newspapers! He besets my footsteps—besieges my dwelling-place, persecutes me with letters, sends me his picture, follows me to church, throws stones at my windows in the night, and frightens my very life out, yet the law leaves me unprotected, because he commits no actual breach of the peace. It was to avoid him that I begged my aunt to let me live here! How did he discover my retreat?"

Caroline seemed to have lost all command of herself in the agony of her fear, and poured out a flood of words in the rapid and subdued accents of extreme terror, while she re-

treated into the darkest corner of the arbour to screen herself from observation, hastily dragging Marion along with her, and whispering an eager request, if they were discovered, that she would endeavour herself to get off,' and fly towards the house for assistance. "Meantime I shall engage his attention; but if he once sees me, all hope of escape on my part would be vain, while the very endeavour might irritate him! Every thing depends on you, Marion! be resolute, and lose not a moment, or you may be too late."

In agonized suspense and apprehension the two friends remained during several minutes, cowering behind the overhanging branches, and scarcely venturing to breathe, while Caroline bent her head eagerly forward to catch the slightest sound, and grasped Marion's arm almost convulsively, as if to secure her being perfectly immoveable; at length, after sometime, she heaved a deep sigh expressive of relief, and looked up, saying,

"He is surely gone! he must be gone! I never eluded his eye before!—his sight is

almost supernatural, but he must be gone at last! let us hurry home!"

"Stop!" whispered Marion in an under tone, "I heard a rustling close behind us among the leaves and branches. Some one certainly approaches!"

"Fly then, Marion! all is over, and I must face the danger!" said Caroline with sudden energy, while rising and drawing herself up to her full height, with a resolute countenance, though her limbs evidently trembled beneath her, she walked towards the door, saying, in a loud commanding accent, to a tall man much muffled up in a loose great-coat, who had now appeared at the door, "Who goes there? Ernest!!" added she, in tones of angry remonstrance. "How dare you enter my presence again! How dare you intrude here!"

"Be true to yourself and me!" replied the stranger, in a voice which sounded harsh and excited, while the deep full tones appeared to Marion as if she had heard them before, but the darkness prevented her from seeing him

distinctly, even if his dress had not been sufficient to disguise him from the most penetrating eye. "Say what you will, I know you are glad to meet me," added he, in accents of increasing wildness. "All that you do is dictated by others; but Caroline, in her secret heart, loves me! I know that! By your looks, by your voice, by your manner it was revealed to me years ago! Yes, you love me, and cannot deny it! Speak but the word, and we may both be happy,—happier than the wildest dreams of fancy. No impediment can prevent it. Let your aunt conceal you where she will, she cannot hide you from me,—in the farthest corner of the earth,—in the deepest dungeon that ever was dug, I shall find you out, and still free you from persecution. She may do her worst, but love laughs at locksmiths, and I can still enable you to elude her vigilance. I come now prepared, if you will but consent to fly with me!—now,—this moment.—If not, —— ——.

The madman's voice, which had been loud and vehement, here dropped into a low, stern,

inaudible murmur, and his hand plunged into the breast of his coat, seemed as if it grasped some weapon there, while Marion, taking advantage of his pre-occupied attention, darted off with the speed of thought, and almost as noiselessly fled towards the house. A loud angry cry to stop her, mingled with curses and imprecations, from the madman, while he waved his singularly long arms menacingly above his head, only accelerated her pace, while he followed some steps in pursuit; but terror gave wings to her feet, and rushing into the entrance-hall, she instantly rang the large dinner bell, and raised an alarm, which assembled the whole household, all of whom gazed with looks of panic-struck astonishment at Marion's pale and ghastly countenance.

Not a moment required to be lost in explanation, for Mrs Penfold seemed at once to guess the whole nature and extent of Caroline's danger, the instant her name was mentioned; therefore Marion had but to point out the direction in which she might be found,

when Mrs Penfold hastened forward, preceded by several of the more active servants.

When Marion had rapidly executed some orders committed to her, she quickly returned towards the arbour, but not a trace remained there of any one. The little table had been upset, several branches torn down that surrounded the entrance, and the grass beneath was much trampled and disfigured; but all was silent and deserted. After one hurried glance of alarm and perplexity, Marion hastened forward to the garden gate, which she found had been violently burst open, and on emerging into the high road beyond, she there found Mrs Penfold and her servants all crowding round Caroline, who remained in a dead faint on the ground for nearly half an hour.

A carriage was rapidly disappearing at full speed in the distance, but already almost too far off to be distinguished; and Marion perceived the figure of a man lurking behind the hedge, close beside her; but when she made it evident that he was observed, he rushed up close to her side, saying, in a threatening tone, between



his clenched teeth, "You have provoked a madman!"

Scarcely had Marion time to utter an exclamation of sudden affright, before he sprung over the hedge, and was seen running across the neighbouring fields, until his figure mingled with the surrounding gloom, and vanished out of sight.

Mrs Penfold's chief care, after Caroline's recovery from her alarming swoon, was earnestly to enjoin that the circumstances of this adventure should never be mentioned, or so much as remembered by those who had witnessed them; a story so extraordinary and alarming, being likely to injure her establishment, besides causing much unnecessary gossip among the younger pupils; but had Marion even been disposed to consign, as desired. the whole adventure to oblivion, she could not but be continually reminded of it for several weeks afterwards, by the startled and agitated manner of Caroline, whose frolicsome spirits had entirely deserted her, while she seemed for some time to be in imminent danger of

a nervous fever. If any one appeared suddenly in the room, she almost screamed with the start it occasioned her; she could not bear for a moment to remain alone, and seemed as if continually listening, even when safe in the house, for the sound of steps in pursuit of her. Gradually, however, her mind became more composed, and she ventured one day to take a stroll with Marion in some of the nearer parts of the garden, though even there she scarcely spoke above her breath, and turned hastily round several times, as if apprehensive that some one approached.

Had the far-famed Upas tree grown over the arbour, Caroline could scarcely have shunned more fearfully the slightest approach in that direction, and with equal care did she avoid any allusion to what had occurred there, not a hint of which ever transpired in her most confidential moments. The very sound of her own feet on the gravel seemed to startle her, and as she walked beneath the shade of some tall forest trees which overhung the garden-wall, Marion observed that

Caroline trod more cautiously; and though she dropped not a word respecting her feelings or fears, it was evident that her nerves were strung to an agony of sensitiveness, for the fluttering of a bird in a hedge, or the fall of a leaf, made her start, and she seemed about at last to give up the point in despair, and hurry homewards, when suddenly a loud shrill whistle arose amidst the branches of an ash-tree, almost directly over their heads, and before Marion had time to look round, a small packet had dropped at the feet of Caroline.

With a half-suppressed cry of alarm, the terrified girl fled, while Marion, scarcely less frightened, instinctively picked up the parcel, and followed, while again she was pursued by a volley of oaths and imprecations, which ended in a laugh so wild, so maniacal, and so fearful, that for months afterwards it rung in her ears, causing her a shudder of horror and alarm.

When Mrs Penfold tore open an innumerable multitude of seals which closed the

packet addressed to Caroline, she discovered within only a long incoherent letter of several sheets, filled with the most extravagant professions of ardent love, and the most vehement declarations, that nothing on earth could impede or discourage him in his resolution to carry her off, which he seemed still persuaded, with the self-delusion peculiar to madness, must be a welcome assurance to Caroline, whose words and actions he perseveringly attributed to the arbitrary influence of others. Accompanying this farrago of most intolerable nonsense, was a black shade in a wooden frame, representing the profile of a young man, certainly handsome, and which seemed to Marion like features she had known elsewhere, but being frequently addicted to observing resemblances, she felt at once persuaded that this must be some such vague and unaccountable likeness as she had frequently found or fancied before.

Time wore on, and still Caroline lingered at school, unwilling apparently to forsake the comparative quietness of Mrs Penfold's,

where, though her age exceeded by some years that of the other pupils, and though her cotemporary Clara had been already introduced into society, she still seemed anxious to forget herself and her affairs in the multitude of her masters and studies, so completely was she engrossed by which, that she evidently grudged every moment and every thought which interrupted her progress. At length, on the evening previous to that fixed on for her final departure from school, when Mrs Smythe was expected to convey her home, Mrs Penfold was bestowing on Caroline some of her last advice, on the most approved modes of "getting on" in society, and especially on the manners and conversation most attractive to gentlemen, when a note was brought into the room, which had arrived by express, bringing the melancholy intelligence that Mrs Smythe's carriage had been upset a few miles off, causing so severe a blow on the head, that a concussion of the brain had taken place, and she continued insensible, at a village some miles off, where

little hope remained of her recovery. The Doctor who wrote these hurried particulars had obligingly sent his own carriage and servant to convey Miss Smythe to the spot, that she might take a last leave of her dying relative, and he recommended that she should not lose an instant, or it might be too late to find the sufferer in life.

Struck with grief and consternation by this most unexpected and calamitous intelligence, Caroline, though she had never before seemed much to love her aunt, yet now became overwhelmed with the shock, and lost not an instant in hastily preparing to obey the melancholy summons, by throwing on her cloak and bonnet, while she rushed into the arms of Marion, and burst into an agony of tears in bidding her farewell.

The French governess who had been summoned to escort Caroline in the carriage, was one of those nervous persons, who became perfectly frantic when hurried, and she flew about the room, uttering a volley of incoherent exclamations, expressive of her wonder

and perplexity at so sudden a call on her activity, while her preparations seemed to make no visible progress. There is a secret, mysterious pleasure in being waited for, which every living mortal seems to enjoy when they have the opportunity; and without a thought of Caroline's impatience, her anxiety, and her sorrow, Madame D'Aubert expressed the most eager and vehement solicitude about her own dress, and a resolution not to stir till equipped to her entire satisfaction, for so rare and almost unprecedented an event, as leaving the boundaries of Dartmore House.

Every thing that has a limit, however, must come to an end, and Madame D'Aubert's toilette being at last completed, she leisurely advanced, talking to herself and to everybody else, arranging her shawl, and giving a last finish to the contour of her bonnet, before she threw herself with dignified deliberation into the chariot.

Marion had affectionately insisted on conveying her weeping friend to the carriage, while, with all the little arts of affection, she

tried to console and encourage her, till at length they exchanged a final embrace, and parted. Scarcely, however, had Miss Smythe placed her foot upon the steps, while the man-servant who accompanied the carriage carefully assisted her in, before Marion suddenly sprung forward with an exclamation of terror, seized hold of Caroline's dress, and before she could speak, dragged her forcibly into the house, exclaiming in accents almost inarticulate from alarm,

"Come back, Caroline! come back! This is some mistake! some dreadful trick! Caroline! dear Caroline! come back! That servant wears the very dress of the person who attacked you in the garden! I cannot see his face, but I am certain it is he!"

Before Marion could finish her sentence, the supposed servant had violently seized Miss Smythe by the arms, and was about forcibly to drag her towards the carriage, when the loud cries of Marion brought assistance. The almost fainting girl was rescued, and the post-chaise secured; but not

a trace could be seen of the madman, who instantly vanished; and the post-boy could give no intelligence respecting him, except that he had been ordered out at an inn close by, in urgent haste, that evening, with a promise of double payment if he implicitly obeyed the gentleman, who seemed highly irritable, and swore at him in a most fearful manner, if he made the slightest delay, or so much as asked a direction which way to turn.

The most diligent search was made, but made in vain, by the officers of police, to find out the lunatic's retreat, which eluded their utmost research; and as Caroline Smythe was privately removed soon afterwards from school, where the subject was forbidden ever to be mentioned, the whole story seemed almost buried in oblivion, and Marion herself felt at last as if the entire adventure had been an agitating dream, remembered by no one but herself.

CHAPTER VII.

"Hear! hear! and a laugh!

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

Marion's sister, Agnes, five years older than herself, after being distinguished as the best musician, best sketcher, best linguist, best everything, at Mrs Penfold's, had left school with no real knowledge, except of the most frivolous kind, accidentally gathered in conversation, and repeated again in society like a parrot. Formed to excite the most rapturous admiration, by the gorgeous magnificence of her almost regal beauty, art had acted the part of the Fairy Bountiful in forming Agnes, while nature had showered her choicest gifts on Marion.

Agnes was brilliant without being interesting, and dazzling without being attractive, for her mind seemed irremediably and incorrigibly vulgar, selfish, and vain. A good actress, an inimitable mimic, and incomparable in a tableau, she assumed generally a queen-like dignity of manner, "stalking through life," as Sir Arthur said, "with an assured and stately step, as if practising for her appearance as a Duchess at the next coronation."

Admiration seemed to Agnes the only pleasure of life, and amusement its only business; while, if ever she had possessed any sensibility, it was frittered away on the fictitious sorrows of the Adelines and Julias in the volumes which she read with surpassing diligence from a circulating library; though in all other respects, Agnes wasted her time amidst such listless idleness, that she might have let her nails grow, like those of a Chinese mandarin, to testify how literally she did nothing.

No one, certainly, could excel Agnes in turning up her hands and eyes at the faults

of others; but those who trace nothing except evil in their companions, have seldom much good in themselves. Marion found it one of the most important and pleasing studies in the world, to comprehend the character and temper of her friends and connexions, besides her own, with a wish to render herself suitable to them, as her mind, pliable without weakness, was bent on constantly yielding her own wishes to those she loved; but this unobtrusive generosity was only a subject of satirical remark to her sister, who could neither understand nor believe in Marion's utter singleness of heart, and disinterestedness; her own sole aim being selfish indulgence, and her sole rule to obtain it in the easiest possible way.

Self-love was the ruling passion of Agnes; love of others the quickening principle, or rather impulse with Marion, who would have zealously planted flowers for even strangers to enjoy; but Agnes would have plucked all those of her friends, and scarcely taken the trouble to rear any even for her own use.

Agnes, cold, vain, heartless, and self-sufficient, thought she was made only for this world, and this world for her, and for such as herself, young, gay, rich, and lovely, while all others were mere intruders on the creation. But Marion, on the contrary, followed the dictates of her own heart, in wishing to do good of every kind to every person, while still she had learned to aim above nature, to that high standard of Christian perfection, so exalted, that those who have gained the most elevated human attainment in virtue and excellence, must still consider the structure of their minds, however beautifully decorated with generous sympathies and kind emotions, as being only begun, while they perseveringly aspire upwards, even to the measurement of that Divine Being who left us an example that we should follow his steps.

Agnes had now been, for three seasons, the reigning beauty of Edinburgh! There it is the privilege of every tolerable-looking girl to be considered in her own set pre-eminent, during the first winter after she is intro-

duced; but though the public eye usually grows weary of the same features, however perfect, during a second campaign, Agnes had apparently taken out a diploma of beauty, the reputation for which seemed confirmed to others by her own thorough conviction of being completely unrivalled, and by the exulting consciousness she displayed of her own supreme loveliness. Three seasons of tumultuous joy, triumph, and conquest, had already succeeded each other, during which Agnes was, to use her own expression, "fiercely gay," yet still no younger rival had appeared to eclipse the dazzling array of her charms; and not a whisper was heard that the freshness of her Raphael-like beauty was at all impaired; nor were any ladies ever heard to "wonder" what gentlemen could possibly see to admire in Agnes Dunbar, as not a dissenting voice had yet ventured to make itself audible on that subject.

Agnes began life with that perfect confidence in her own knowledge of the world, universally felt by young ladies under twenty,

especially when they have seen very little of it, and with a thousand schemes and projects of perfect happiness. Though one after another her castles of cards fell to the ground, still, in the exercise of persevering energy, she rebuilt the edifice again with new materials, and on what she imagined a better construction, but still in every instance, to her own unutterable astonishment, she found that most unaccountably, "hope told a flattering tale!"

Considering every officer she danced with as a hero, and every gentleman who paid her a compliment as a lover, Agnes wasted her first season, as most young ladies do, in flirting with scarlet uniforms, the inhabitants of which were generally so much alike in ideas and conversation, that if blindfolded, she might have found it difficult or impossible to distinguish which of her countless red and gold admirers happened at the moment to be "doing the agreeable."

All her military victims were dying to know what Agnes thought of their brother officers;

whether she intended to adorn the next ball by her presence, or the next concert; how she liked their military band; if she proposed patronising their night at the theatre; whether she preferred a *galope* fast or slow; how she thought the colonel's daughter looked on horseback; whether she did not think it barbarously tyrannical of the commander-in-chief to insist on their all wearing uniforms; how she liked the new regulation jacket; and above all, whether she thought the order for their wearing mustachios an improvement or not!

To all these subjects, and many more of similar import, Agnes lent her very profound attention, not only during the discussion, but in many a solitary hour, while her whole head, heart, and understanding were crowded with the recollection of epaulettes, mustachios, spurs, and gold lace, and she privately believed that the supreme felicity of earth,—all the most refined sensibilities of life, and all its brightest joys, were to be found at Piershill Barracks.

Sir Patrick laughingly alleged that Agnes had rehearsed a set of prepared conversations suited to every different occasion,—a musical conversation for amateurs, full of crotchets and quavers,—a hunting conversation about foxes, dogs, and steeple-chases,—a Court of Session conversation for the lawyers,—and a dragoon conversation, discussing at great length whether officers should dance with spurs or without them, and in which she had been known to enumerate correctly, the facings of every regiment in Her Majesty's service.

Her brother often and loudly declared that nothing is more perfectly hopeless, than for any young lady to expect a serious attachment from an officer actually quartered with his regiment, as it was against all rule, and contrary to all nature or custom, for Cupid to attack the army. The mess-table, he assured her, invariably sets its face against matrimony, and the mess-table conversation was an ordeal, through which he protested that few young ladies could wish their names to pass;

but nevertheless, Agnes, full of groundless expectations and lively vanity, continued to endure a succession of heart-rending and unaccountable disappointments, from very promising military admirers, who had stolen her bouquets, listened to her music, and drunk Sir Patrick's claret month after month; but no sooner did marching orders come for Dublin, Leeds, or Canada, than these interesting affairs came to an untimely end with a P.P.C. card, or a sort of never-expect-to-meet-again bow, and Agnes was left with the army list in her hand, wondering what regiment would come next, and whether there were many unmarried officers in it.

"How amusing it is," said Agnes, in a confidential mood, one day to Clara and Caroline, "when I walk about with Captain De Crespigny at the promenades or balls, and see all the other beaux looking angry or disappointed!"

"Nothing on earth is so charming, I suppose, as to be a beauty!" exclaimed Caroline, with a good-humoured sigh, and a look of

comic humility, "I would sacrifice ten years of my life to be admired for one! To hear people saying, 'Have you seen the lovely Miss Smythe? Is Miss Smythe to show herself at Lady Towercliffe's party?' and then, like you, Agnes, to have all the beaux dying for me!"

"I would rather be married for any attraction in the world, than mere beauty," said Clara, earnestly; "even money is a more tolerable motive. How insufferable it would be, to live with a person whose affection depended on whether your hair were well dressed, or your shoes well made!"

"That is the very thing I should like!" exclaimed Agnes, "to see it considered of the greatest consequence whether I wore pink or blue, and whether it were one of my well-looking days or not!"

"But then, Agnes, your well-looking days would occur seldomer and seldomer, while, during the very periods of illness and depression, when attention and kindness are most needed, a fastidious husband would feel in-

jured if your complexion were not at its best," replied Clara, laughing. "No! no! give me the happiness that will, as my milliner says, 'wash and wear well!'—good fire-side domestic comfort."

"Comfort! I hate comfort!" said Agnes indignantly, "a stupid, detestable word, as opposite to real happiness as night is to day! I shall be satisfied with nothing short of felicity."

"But felicity can last only a day, while peace and comfort may be enjoyed for life," replied Clara. "In talking of marriage, you seem to think of nothing beyond the honeymoon, and to forget the hours, days, and years of actual life that must follow!"

"It is absolute nonsense looking so far out to sea, as you do, Clara," said Agnes, impatiently. "How I shall enjoy, next winter, perhaps, chaperoning you both to parties if I can find any fascinating victim, tall, thin, and handsome enough to please me."

"But surely you would not, for any consideration, marry yet!" exclaimed Caroline.

"Lady Towercliffe says, that the holiday of a girl's life is from the time she leaves school till the day she marries, and you should enjoy ten years at least, Agnes, before you are tempted to begin the cares of life."

"Cares!" exclaimed Agnes, with a contemptuous laugh, "I do not mean ever to take any cares upon myself! but, as Captain De Crespigny very sensibly observed yesterday, the husband worthy of me should be made on purpose. In the first place, he must be rich, for I have a scruple of conscience in even witnessing a poor marriage, where, after the wedding-cake has been eaten, there is nothing else left. In every thing,—even the mere choice of a ribbon,—I am fastidious, and would rather not have a thing at all, than dispense with getting precisely what I like. My intended, then, must have been educated at Eton, for I do think the ugliest bit of human nature on earth is a Scotch school-boy of about fourteen. He must have such a foot! so small! oh! no foot at all. He must employ Buckmaster the tailor, get his shoes from

Paris, and never wear the same gloves twice. He must ——."

"My dear Agnes! this should be all put into the contract!" said Clara, laughing. "It perfectly ruins me to hear you talk so extravagantly; and, besides, pray be warned in time of your own probable fate, that the beauty of a family, or the beauty of a winter, is said always to make a poor marriage. I never could understand the reason of that; but Lady Towercliffe says, men are perverse beings, who like to criticise and undervalue a professed beauty, while, in the mean time, they are taken by surprise, and fall in love unexpectedly with some obscure girl, whose charms they discover, or fancy for themselves, and whom, probably, not another man living ever thought tolerable."

"For my part," said Caroline, "I shall wait till a person can be found as handsome as Sir Patrick, as agreeable as you tell me Captain De Crespigny is, as clever as Mr Granville, as merry as young De Lancey

"And as rich as Lord Doncaster!" interrupted Agnes.

"No! no! ——, a hundred times no!" replied Caroline, colouring, speaking in a singular tone of asperity, "I hate and abhor money as a consideration in marrying! I wish money had never been invented! It becomes a misery for those who have too much, as well as for those who have too little."

"Well! give me money," said Agnes, laughing. "And let me tell you, Caroline, that even if you have eight or ten thousand pounds, which is probably the utmost, you will find it no great inconvenience during the long run of life. Money has its merits, and I should be afraid to marry any man, even the most romantic of my lovers, if it involved the necessity for his sacrificing one of his usual comforts;—if it obliged him to drink his bottle of sherry instead of claret every day, I am not quite sure that he would never begin to grumble! They tell me it should be considered a happy marriage where a man

does not wish himself twice every day unmarried again. No, no, money is no bad thing, and if you have any to spare, pray let me have the surplus."

"Who, and what are Mrs and Miss Smythe?" was a frequent question of Agnes to herself, never apparently to obtain a satisfactory answer. On Caroline leaving school, her aunt had taken a villa at Portobello, where the two English strangers excited extreme attention, more from their evident desire to avoid it, than from any thing very remarkable in their appearance or manner, though Mrs Smythe was certainly of that *genus* old maid so common in England, with a handsome independence, a suite of servants, a pony-carriage, most splendid dress, and some pretensions still to youth and beauty, as any fragment of good looks that yet remained she most liberally displayed; while her manner had a flirting tone of coquetry most unsuitable to her apparent age, forming a singular contrast to the quaker-like simplicity of Caroline's dress.

There was a singular contrast between the gravity of costume affected by Miss Smythe, and the keen festivity of spirit with which she entered into every scheme of amusement, or even, it might be said, of mischief. Her vivacity was occasionally almost overpowering, her fancy lively beyond example, while with her brilliant, yet interesting animation, there was mingled a rare acuteness of mind, a swift comprehension, and an innate passion for all that was amiable or beautiful, which gave liveliness and vigour to what she said, though the rapidity of her mind sometimes led Caroline to a false estimate of persons and circumstances, as she always judged or acted from instantaneous impulse; yet there was a generous frankness in her disposition, which captivated those who knew her, and a graceful simplicity in all she did, which gave it interest; for, without intention, there was something in all her thoughts or actions, striking and peculiar.

Her features, though irregular, attracted and enchained the eye, from the magical variety of their expression, and though an

amateur of mere beauty might have been surprised and perplexed to divine why her light grey eyes, pale cheeks, and chesnut hair could beguile his attention away from the more perfect contour of others, the amateur of physiognomy was delighted to find there an ever-varying source of interest in watching the bright emanations of thought, feeling, and vivacity, which glittered or sparkled in her eye, or played about her mouth.

When Mrs Smythe first settled at Portobello, scarcely a week of gossiping, wonder, and conjecture had elapsed, in the little community around, when she requested to have an interview with Sir Arthur alone, which took place immediately, and must have excited much interest in his mind, as the Admiral remained silent and abstracted during the whole subsequent evening, while he strolled slowly up and down the drawing-room, "pacing the quarter-deck," as he called it, for a length of time; and, after being closeted some hours the following day with Mrs Smythe and his confidential agent, they

proceeded to a magistrate's house together, with whom they requested a private conference, the purport of which did not transpire.

From that day, an intimacy, amounting to friendship, was established between Sir Arthur and the two ladies, who seemed on all occasions to look to him for advice and protection, and in whose house they spent a part of every day, to the unspeakable delight of Henry De Lancey, who was charmed, on his return from college, to find so agreeable an addition to the small circle at Seabeach cottage.

"Years rush by us like the wind;" and how rapid seems the transition from boyhood to mature years! Henry had early attained an extraordinary development of mind and appearance, a strength of intellect and a decision of purpose which seemed to Sir Arthur almost precocious, while every day discovered some new talent, or enlarged those he already possessed, for his mind seemed ever on the wing and full of energy. "Either he is nobly born, or nature has a nobility of her own,"

thought the Admiral, when viewing the character of his young protégé, as it gradually arose to personal and intellectual supremacy. His mind was ardent, courageous, and deeply contemplative, full of generous impulses, but apt to view all that happened to himself through an exaggerated medium. His mysterious history, and the fascination of his manner and appearance cast a spell over the interest and affections of all who beheld his countenance, or heard tho sound of his harmonious voice. With a strikingly handsome person, he had already acquired a decided air of fashion and refinement, while a bright vein of almost chivalrous romance which enlivened his mind, was subdued by a poetical temperament, inclining him to dwell much on melancholy musings, relating to the strange circumstances of his own early history. Keenly sensitive to kindness or neglect, his love and gratitude to Sir Arthur were without bounds, and his brotherly affection for Marion was tinged with the natural enthusiasm of his disposition, but before long the warmest and

deepest feelings of his nature were secretly concentrated on the gay, giddy, and fascinating Caroline Smythe. Every scrap of paper that came in his way became covered with sketches of her buoyant figure and graceful profile, in a variety of animated attitudes; or, on other occasions, verses in Latin or English, little better certainly than the nonsense verses at school, immortalised her charms.

Young as he was, however, Henry's spirit recoiled already from the danger of loving too well, or being beloved by any, when he was taught, in hours of solitary reflection, to remember that principle and honour must forbid him to seek a mutual attachment, while his name and station remained unknown, and, perhaps, disgraceful. There was a bewildering power in Caroline's society, which chained him to her side wherever they met, while, contrary to his resolutions and wishes, his every look, smile, word, and action became steeped in love. Often and severely did he upbraid himself for this vain and dangerous indulgence, but he seemed spell-bound and unable

to remember, in her presence, any thing but the delight of listening to her gay sallies and her delicious laugh; though the mirth of her young eyes became veiled often by a look of care as sudden, as it was to him unaccountable, being so foreign to the sparkling, almost mischievous gayety of her nature.

Henry's devoted, and nearly boyish attachment, raised in his heart many a high aspiration after future distinction, many a bright hope of honour, promotion, and usefulness. The model for his imitation in every thing noble and distinguished was Sir Arthur, and he resolved to sacrifice love itself, till he had attained, like him, a name and a station for himself. The very sound of Sir Arthur's step, the very tones of his voice, were dear to him; and, casting aside every softer emotion connected with his romantic reveries respecting Caroline, he became impatient to face the bitter blasts of the world's trials, taking his beloved benefactor for his example, and the Holy Scriptures as his guide.

"Perhaps," thought he, allowing his young

mind to wander away from the dull inexorable realities of life, while a rapturous smile of anticipated joy lighted up his countenance. "Perhaps, when honour and distinction have at last crowned my efforts, I may yet be acknowledged in the face of the world, by those connexions who have now so mysteriously cast me off. Perhaps Caroline herself may at last be proud to return that fervent attachment, of which she has not yet even a suspicion! The old proverb says, 'all men know what they are, but none know what they shall be!' I know neither the one nor the other; but I must not be satisfied with vaguely coveting learning, honour, or usefulness hereafter, contemplating like a mere child the end without the way, but seek them energetically. Nothing is impossible to those who persevere! This may and must be a rough world of difficulty to me, but amidst a thousand buffetings and humiliations to come, I feel an undying hope of success, while even in this scene of hard and trying discipline, my best comfort and encouragement shall ever be drawn from

the august truths of religion, in all their awfulness and solemn obligations."

Knowledge is power, and knowledge of character is the greatest power of all, but Henry, in general very penetrating, was perplexed by the flirting, light-headed manner of Mrs Smythe, whenever she was in the society of gentlemen her own contemporaries in age, and the grave deferential manner she adopted towards her young companion, whom she seemed to treat almost inadvertently as her superior, though the slightest indication of her doing so usually brought the ready colour of Caroline in vivid flashes to her cheek, and caused an appearance of mutual embarrassment between the aunt and niece, which surprised and puzzled him. Their extraordinary munificence to the poor and public charities also astonished him, as that appeared so widely disproportioned to their visible means and usual expenditure, though it seemed only to please without surprising Sir Arthur, who was accustomed to give so liberally himself, that Henry sometimes feared he encouraged

his newly-found friends in a degree of lavish extravagance, inconsistent with the ordinary means of single ladies; yet all was given with a graceful negligent indifference to the vulgar subject of pounds, shillings, and pence, quite unprecedented. Subscriptions to church extension, missionaries, schools, Bibles, blankets, food, clothing, coals, money, and medicine, were scattered around them with unsparing profusion, though it appeared to Henry, that, in the case of Mrs Smythe herself, whose name always appeared ostensibly on the list as the larger contributor, there was less alacrity in giving, than in Caroline who seemed to be purse-bearer for both, and always defrayed the whole amount.

Among the many things which surprised Henry in Mrs and Miss Smythe, nothing had that effect more than the keen, intense, and rather satirical interest with which both ladies gathered up every particular relating to the manners, flirtations, and adventures of Captain De Crespigny, though it was evident, that while both ladies could relate every par-

ticular of his former history and character, neither knew him by sight. Mrs Smythe mentioned rather contemptuously some vague recollections of him formerly as a pert, awkward school-boy, while, to Henry's increasing perplexity, the young lady's colour visibly rose to carnation whenever he was unexpectedly named, and her eyes usually glittered with a suppressed smile, if any anecdote or description in Sir Arthur's conversation related to him, till at length the curiosity which had so long been evidently fermenting in the minds of Mrs and Miss Smythe, exploded one day in the form of an eager request, that Sir Arthur would invite Captain De Crespigny to meet them at dinner.

Marion and Henry were amused at the laughing alacrity with which Sir Arthur at once consented, and they observed, after the note was despatched, that many a whispered consultation took place, and many a merry jest passed among the lively trio, to which they were not made a party, while the two ladies appeared evidently in extacies of amuse-

ment at their anticipated introduction. Marion would have given worlds to witness the scene, but her furlugh from Mrs Penfold's had expired on the very day of Sir Arthur's party, and she was most unwillingly deposited in a carriage with her baggage, at the moment when Captain De Crespigny alighted in full huzzar uniform, out of the minibus which had conveyed him from Piershill.

The Admiral's party was exceedingly small and select, but the guests appeared all in gay buoyant spirits, while Captain De Crespigny, seeing but one young lady in the room, looked upon himself as her natural property, and handed her to dinner, though no formal presentation had taken place.

With Caroline he was, before long, flirting to the top of his bent, while she assumed a charming look of consciousness when he addressed her, receiving the whole artillery of his small talk and civilities with a most interesting expression of naïvété, though once Henry observed in her smile so odd a mixture of mirth and malice, while, at the same time,

a look of covert humour lurked in her eye, and quivered on her lip, that he could not but wonder at the grave demure look which she affected.

Nothing was ever more enchanting to Captain De Crespigny than the blushing averted looks with which Caroline listened to all his insinuated admiration, while now and then she nodded and smiled with the prettiest air of incredulity imaginable, if he professed it more openly. Occasionally, however, Captain De Crespigny was almost put out of countenance by her very unexpected replies, or very mal-apropos questions, which gradually led him on, he scarcely knew how, into flirting perfectly *à l'outrance*, while opportunities seemed purposely afforded him with a degree of tact perfectly incredible in one so young, and apparently unsophisticated, to say even more than he had ever said before. With a gay, laughing animation, almost amounting to silliness, the young lady archly doubted his sincerity, admired his wit, and slyly misunderstood all his compliments, till he was obliged

to repeat his meaning, and explain his insinuations, making his professions and speeches all so exceedingly plain and undisguised, that, to his own astonishment, he found himself positively making love, on a very few hours' acquaintance, with a degree of explicitness which had never occurred to him in the whole course of his practice before.

In the evening Caroline was, after many entreaties, prevailed on to favour Captain De Crespigny with a song, and never had he been so completely perplexed, as by those with which the young lady, preserving a look of most imperturbable gravity, proceeded to favour him. She seemed to have a dozen different voices, and half-a-dozen different styles of performance, but had evidently been well taught, and displayed occasionally some beautiful notes. At first her tones were clear and sharp, accompanied by the strangest flourishes and cadences that Captain De Crespigny had ever heard or imagined. In the next song, her voice was low and husky, while her eyes were most sentimentally elevated to the ceil-

ing, with a sort of St Cecilia expression, rather partaking, however, of the ludicrous, and in her voice another like a mouse in a cupboard. At one time her tone reminded him of a well-known singer at Vauxhall; at another he felt persuaded she was taking off Clara Novello; occasionally there was so considerable a tinge of the brogue, that he became convinced she must be Irish, and she ended by singing, "The Dog's Meat Man," in a tone out-screaming a peacock, but adopting the air and attitude of a Catalani, and concluded with looking exultingly round in expectation of rapturous applause, which Sir Arthur bestowed in abundance, and Captain De Crespigny in comparative moderation, being for the first time in his life at a loss to know whether he were treated on this occasion in jest or in earnest.

Repeated subsequent meetings at Seabeach Cottage continued the intimacy which Captain De Crespigny had so oddly begun, and his curiosity became more and more piqued, by the singularity of Miss Smythe's manner

and conversation. She displayed, along with a most extravagant love of amusement, a genius for satire and mimicry quite unprecedented, and in which she most freely indulged. Many a scene was acted over by her, and supported by Henry with astonishing talent and vivacity, for both seemed to have a similar propensity, being able, after an hour's intercourse with any individual, to imitate his whole peculiarities with almost magical precision,—to follow in an imaginary conversation the very train of his ideas, and to represent every little trick or habitual expression, every turn of the head, and every tone of the voice, with a gay look of mockery which would have made their fortunes on the stage.

One evening, Sir Arthur having delivered up to his young friends the key of an old chest, filled with velvet coats and brocaded silk dresses, formerly worn by his bye-gone ancestors, Caroline, Henry, and Captain De Crespigny amused themselves by grouping some beautiful tableaux, and by acting cha-

rades. At one time, both the gentlemen appeared in similar costumes, as Shakespeare's two Dromios in the Comedy of Errors, when Sir Arthur suddenly exclaimed, as if he had made some great discovery, "How very strange that I never before observed the likeness between you two good-looking young fellows! I declare it is quite remarkable! If you were brothers in reality as well as in pretence, it could scarcely be more striking! Do pray Captain De Crespigny, turn your profile more towards Mrs Smythe, that she may see what I mean!"

Henry laughingly received these remarks as an undoubted compliment, and bowed with good-humoured grace to Sir Arthur, who observed with astonishment that Captain De Crespigny's colour rushed to his very temples, and receded again, leaving his countenance pale and almost ghastly, while he suddenly broke off the entertainment, and strode up to the fire-place, where for some minutes he stood, with his back to the company, in evident agitation, while a dead silence ensued.

"Well!" whispered Sir Arthur to Caroline, "I have often been told that people are never pleased with a likeness, but certainly Louis De Crespigny is the most conceited of men, to feel so intolerably angry at being compared to my young friend here. There are certainly worse-looking people in the world than Henry!" added the Admiral, with a look of partial affection. "And it was no such insult as De Crespigny seems to think, when I paid him the compliment, to say that he resembled my boy, who is in every respect the very pride of my heart."

"I wish the Captain may never meet with a greater mortification," replied Caroline, laughing; "and I am sure he would be much the better of a few pretty severe ones to keep him in his senses!"

Henry meantime had observed with good-humoured surprise, and no small degree of perplexity, the excitement, so disproportioned to the occasion, into which Captain De Crespigny had been thrown by Sir Arthur's re-

mark, but with boyish frankness he instantly went up to him, saying, in a lively and rallying tone,

"I am sure Sir Arthur did not mean anything personal, Captain De Crespigny; but his remark only proves my uncommon skill in assuming a likeness to any one I please. My success in disguising myself at college, was often beyond my intentions or utmost hopes. You would not know me yourself, if I represented an old man, or a French hair-dresser, as I have sometimes done!"

"Indeed!" replied Captain De Crespigny, trying to recover himself, "I should think there was not the dress upon earth in which I would not know you again!"

"Well! some day perhaps, as a beggar, I may, with your leave, beguile you of half-a-crown."

"It would be a clever beggar who succeeded in that! but I defy you there. Half-a-crown! why! I have only as much as that to keep me till midsummer! You have my free leave to try me at any time, or in any

way you please, and my pardon for all your success!"

"I can only say," interposed Sir Arthur, "that the impudent rascal brought real tears into my eyes, not long ago, by a story he trumped up at my door, which would have deceived the whole Mendicity Society. He can make himself appear as old as myself,— and I declare one day he looked not very unlike your uncle, Lord Doncaster!"

A vivid flush passed over the whole forehead and features of Captain De Crespigny at these words; but assuming a sudden tone of liveliness and vivacity, he summoned Henry to continue their entertainments for the evening, which were to be concluded by acting a proverb, of which Sir Arthur and his guests were to discover the design. Miss Smythe, dressed in cottage costume, seated herself pensively on a stool, after which Captain De Crespigny, equipped with a bow in his hand, and carrying on his back a quiver filled with all the old pens in the house to represent arrows, entered in the character of Love, and

was about to aim his darts at the peasant girl, when Henry, disguised in a tattered old cloak, to personate poverty, limped slowly into the room. On seeing this beggarly apparition, Cupid, pushing his hair up till it stood on end, assumed an expression of comic horror, and with a shriek of dismay, rushed to the window, as if about to jump out.

The whole party laughed heartily, and declared that the *dehouement* of this piece contained a most salutary lesson against a mere love-match; and Sir Arthur said, for his own part he would attend to the warning,—that all portionless young ladies might consider the case hopeless with him, and he trusted every one present intended to be equally prudent!

"Yes! most assuredly!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny. "I am almost tempted now to take my uncle's advice, and propose to my cousin, Miss Howard the heiress, though love flies out of the window whenever I think of her. She was a little pert, red-fingered, flaxen-haired child when we parted last! The

memory of that girl often haunts me like a night-mare since, for my poor mother on her death-bed, got a promise made about our being married, or something of that kind. I never heard the particulars, but I believe we were to be made acquainted, and refuse one another, before either of us could accept any one else, but I should think there could be little chance of anything that depended on my being refused!"

Captain De Crespigny was bowing himself off late in the evening, and taking a very particular leave of Miss Smythe, having called up all his most fascinating graces for the occasion, while he felt inwardly gratified by the pleasing conviction that another had been added to the list of young ladies whom he had made miserable for life, when he was surprised to observe her mouth perfectly quivering with suppressed laughter, and an arch satirical gleam in her eye, for which he could not account, though it made him feel somewhat uncomfortable and dissatisfied. If it were possible that any one could be laughing

at him, she certainly was! A world of most intolerable ridicule appeared in her expression,—an air almost of contempt! and he turned to leave the room with a feeling of mortification and anger which he was ashamed to allow even to himself.

When Captain De Crespigny hurriedly opened the drawing-room door, near which he and Caroline had been standing, he was surprised to see a person lurking close behind it, who darted instantly away and disappeared; but before the intruder was out of sight, an exclamation of terror and dismay escaped from the lips of Caroline, who rushed towards Sir Arthur, exclaiming in accents of almost frantic alarm, "He is there! he is there! oh! save me, Sir Arthur! he is there! That horrid, dreadful man! he is there! stop him! stop him!"

Captain De Crespigny instinctively ran in pursuit of the retreating figure, and eagerly attempted to seize him, but the fugitive instantaneously opened the house door, and escaped in the darkness, while, apparently to

intimidate his pursuer, he fired a pistol in the air, and waved another above his head with frantic gestures of rage and violence.

"It is beyond all measure extraordinary how he got into the house!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, in discussing the event with an aspect of grave perplexity. "My doors are most systematically locked after dusk, and not a window is unbarred; yet the locks are unbroken, and the bars untouched!"

"There is something next to supernatural in the way he invariably finds us out, and gets access everywhere," said Mrs Smythe, in almost breathless agitation. "One would imagine he had some unearthly accomplice to discover where we are concealed, and to assist him in escaping the vigilance of the police. Night and day we have been liable to his incursions. In town or country—in the drawing-room or beside our carriage—in church, or going to a party—there he is, lurking secretly near us, or terrifying Caroline by his sudden appearance, and gliding away like a shadow. He baffles every attempt to overtake

or arrest him, but seems for ever on the watch! Sometimes he used to make his presence known by throwing a stone at our windows; often at midnight, by singing hoarsely beneath them, and even occasionally by firing a pistol in the air; but I did hope in this remote corner we might have enjoyed peace and safety. How are we ever to venture home."

"I shall escort you with the whole party in close phalanx," replied Sir Arthur, trying to assume a rallying tone. "Old Martin and myself are quite invulnerable, and I only wish my secretary were also here, as he would be a host in himself; but he is absent on a month's leave, and for the first time in my life I miss him!"

The night being impenetrably dark, and not a sound to be heard but the echo of their footsteps on the gravel, when Mrs Smythe alighted from her carriage to walk across the garden leading towards her house, Sir Arthur immediately desired the servants to bring out lights, when one of the candles having flared up suddenly near Caroline, she thought she

perceived the madman close beside her, lurking behind the stem of a large tree. The dark shadows concealed all but his face, in which there gleamed a look of maniacal triumph and malignity, while rushing close up to Captain De Crespigny, he said in a threatening tone, low and distinct, "He who crosses my path shall die!" and instantly disappeared through the hedge. When Miss Smythe, on hearing his voice, with a stifled scream of terror fled into the house, again that loud and fiendish laugh, which she had already heard once, arose behind her, and rung through the night air in tones of high delirium, causing a cold shudder to thrill through the hearts of even the boldest among her companions, while they hastily followed her, and having placed the trembling girl in apparent safety, soon after took leave, charging the servants to chain and double-lock the door.

It was some hours before Caroline could sufficiently compose her mind to retire; but after the house was perfectly quiet, and the servants in bed, she sat up reading with the hope

that her nerves might become less painfully agitated. The slightest noise caused her heart to beat almost audibly, and she was conscious that a mouse rattling in the wainscot would have caused her to faint. Mrs Smythe could scarcely be prevailed upon to leave her alone, but as they both slept on the drawing-room floor, only divided by a thin partition, Caroline induced her at a late hour to withdraw, while not a sound now disturbed the deep repose of nature, but "the wailing sorrows of some midnight bird."

The moon had arisen, shining with softened radiance into her apartment, when Miss Smythe arose from her devotions, and she could not but think at the moment what a bright emblem of her divine Saviour that glorious luminary presented to the mind, not glowing like the sun with a radiance which no human eye can gaze upon, but reflecting upon the darkened earth a mild subdued refulgence, perfectly suited for the steady contemplation of those whom it had arisen to benefit and cheer.

Nature was hush'd, as if her works ador'd
The night-felt presence of creation's Lord!

Pleased with such thoughts, a gradual composure stole over her senses, and Caroline at length, seeing her candle nearly burned out, consequently determined to retire for the night. Not a sound was to be heard in the house, but her own light step, as she moved about the room,—the very opening of a drawer, or the shutting of her book, sounded unnaturally loud, jarring upon her nerves with a startling effect,—the shadows in the more distant part of the room looked darker than usual, and the least moan of the wind increased the painful tension of her nerves to agony. Scarcely had she begun to undress, when a sudden noise not far off caused her to start with convulsive terror, her heart became chilled with apprehension, the candlestick which she carried in her hand fell to the ground, the light was extinguished, and she stood trembling and alone in total impenetrable darkness.

Caroline tried to persuade herself that the sound must have been produced by her own excited fancy,—she looked around and all was quiet,—she listened and all was perfectly still—she reasoned with herself, and became resolute to try whether sleep might not plunge her into forgetfulness and peace, when her attention was accidentally attracted towards one of the windows, where the bright moonbeams rested on an object which seemed to blast her eyes with horror, and paralyzed her at once in a speechless agony of fear. The top of a ladder rested on the window-sill, upon the summit of which stood the dark figure of a man, his face plastered so close upon the glass, that his nose was perfectly flattened against it, and his hands raised in a menacing attitude towards her. The instant he saw, by Caroline's look of frantic alarm, that she had seen him, he dashed in the window-frame by a single stroke of his powerful arm, and seemed about to make a forcible entrance, when Miss Smythe, with the energy of

despair, threw open the door and fled, calling aloud in the sharp shrill accents of desperation for help.

The servants were speedily assembled around her, and the instant she felt herself in comparative safety, nature could sustain no more, but, convulsed in every nerve, and throwing herself into the arms of Mrs Smythe, with a cry of thankfulness and agitation, she fainted.

An instant alarm was given in the neighbourhood,—a diligent search was made,—and the police for several days exerted their utmost activity to detect the miscreant, but in vain. Not a trace remained to convince Caroline that the whole had not been a hideous dream, except that the ladder had been left standing at her window, and turned out to have been stolen from a neighbouring garden,—the window-frame exhibited a frightful picture of devastation, being literally broken to fragments,—and at some distance in the garden, a loaded pistol was discovered, perfectly

new, which it was hoped might lead to a discovery, by the police tracing out the maker and purchaser, seeing that it had been so recently obtained.

CHAPTER VIII.

On his bold forehead middle age
Had slightly prest his signet sage,
But mirth and frolic glee were there,
The will to do, the soul to dare. SCOTT.

SEVERAL meetings now took place at Sir Arthur's, for the purpose of considering what plans would be best adapted to secure the safety of Mrs and Miss Smythe, till the dangerous madman who persecuted them could be secured and confined, on all which occasions Captain De Crespigny attended, as he rather enjoyed the excitement and interest with which the story filled up his vacant hours, and, careless of the impression he believed himself to be making on the affections of Miss

Smythe, he felt some solicitude respecting her safety, while he expressed ten times more than he felt, and observed, in his usual off-hand style, that this was not the only man whose head she would probably turn, but in his own case, though she had almost put him out of his senses already, yet he would rather make an end of himself than of her.

Caroline dryly thanked him for his obliging intentions on her behalf, and after a lively dialogue, in which the gay huzzar actually excelled himself, in his fervent expressions of admiration and regard, he took leave, rather wondering to think how he had been led on in professing so much, and giving himself a lecture as he rode home, on the propriety of beginning to "back out," seeing that he was getting rather beyond his depth. Still there were several of the reasons for meeting next day, usual with those who have a natural desire to improve an agreeable intimacy,—a song to be practised,—a drawing to be admired,—and Miss Smythe having made a sort of promise to let Captain De Crespigny sit to

her for his picture in the character of Dromio, as she was an admirable artist, the offer became irresistible. He had never yet entered their own house, as meetings were always hitherto arranged at Sir Arthur's, and a slight feeling of curiosity likewise helped him to the agreeable conclusion, that he must for once, and only once, call on "the Smythes," were it only to ascertain what sort of establishment they had.

Punctual to the appointed hour, Captain De Crespigny's groom rung a consequential peal for his master at the gate of Rosemount Villa, such as had not been heard there since bells were invented, and after a considerable delay, the door was opened by a shabby awkward-looking Irish girl, speaking with a powerful brogue, who courtesyed with an appearance of most preposterous respect to Captain De Crespigny as he alighted, and pointed up stairs, begging him to walk in, but without having an idea apparently, that she ought herself to usher him into the drawing-room.

Being always pretty confident of making

himself welcome, Captain De Crespigny advanced, and in his usual gay humorous tone, announced his own name at the drawing-room door, while he threw it open and entered. To his surprise he now found himself in a small, not very splendidly furnished apartment, stretched on the only sofa belonging to which, there lounged in solitary indolence, with a quite-at-home-look, a young man whom he had never seen before. His aspect and dress were equally singular, presenting that happy mixture of the ruffian and the gentleman, not very uncommon in Ireland. Attired in a military great-coat, he wore a most preposterous pair of whiskers and mustachios, long, coarse, and dirty, which looked as if they had been curled over knitting wires. Taking the last remnant of a cigar out of his mouth when the visitor entered, and showing not the smallest surprise, with a smile which betrayed a set of dingy decayed teeth, and a very disfiguring squint, he watched the approaching step of Captain De Crespigny with a *dégagé* look of indifference, saying in a tone of easy familiarity,

"Och! sure! I always know a milithary man for he enters with his lift foot first! Many deserters who would may-be have escaped but the thrick betrayed 'em. A curious fact! Will ye be pleased to sit on your four quarthers, Captain?"

A smile of contempt and ridicule curled on the haughty lip of Captain De Crespigny, while he proudly drew back, saying, in a tone of great reserve, and with the very slightest possible *soupçon* of a bow, "Excuse me, sir! I must have mistaken the house!"

"Arrah! not at all! not in the very laste! Sure! I'm here for the purpose!" exclaimed the stranger, starting up from his recumbent position with astonishing agility, and closing the door, "Is n't it relations we shall be before long, and why should we meet as strangers!"

"Relations! what do you mean, Sir! Here is some ridiculous blunder!" replied Captain De Crespigny, turning contemptuously on his heel. "Allow me to pass! Good morning!"

"Well! relations or connections, it's all

one," continued the Irishman, with a look of easy good humour. "My aunt, Mrs Smythe, dropped me a line, to say I would be wanted about the settlement, though for the matter of that, there is not much, I fancy, on either of your parts to settle. More gold on the outside of the pocket, than the inside, Captain! Hey! excuse me! but as my aunt says, in the matther of money, we take the will for the deed!"

"You must be slightly deranged, sir," interrupted Captain De Crespigny, in a tone of angry perplexity; "I have heard that a madman is loose about this neighbourhood, and I need not go far, I see, to find him!"

"What! Hey! Sure you're not going to forswear all or any thing you have said to my pretty cousin, Caroline. We do make short work of our courtships in Dublin sure enough; but when my aunt told me this morning how soon you had come to the point with Caroline, and nothing left but to fix the day, I laughed ready to kill myself, and says I, 'You beat all Ireland to sticks!'"

"No more of this folly, Sir!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, with rising irritation, and in his most peremptory tone. "Detain me here one moment longer, and I shall send you a shorter way down stairs than you ever tried before!"

"Och, murder! you'll excuse me, Sir, but I've not been dipped in the Shannon for nothing! This must all be settled as gintlemen usually settle these affairs in our counthry! Sure you met my cousin at Sir Arthur's many a time, and you'll not be afther denying that she convarsed with you every day for a matther of four hours!"

"Perhaps she had that honour, but what then?"

"Why thin, Sir! such things as you said, from such a gintleman, are not easily to be forgotten!"

"You are pleased to be complimentary!" replied Captain De Crespigny, turning round his magnificent head with an air of bitter contempt; "but what of that?"

"I heartily wish," continued the Irishman,

with a still stronger brogue than before, "that every young lady who meets with a gintleman such as you, had a cousin like Paddy Smythe to take up her cause, and I am as little to be thrifled with as any man in Ireland! The tongue that deceives me or mine shall never spake again. I have exchanged shots before now on a slighter occasion!"

A momentary pause ensued, during which Captain De Crespigny frowned and bit his lip, in angry embarrassment, while, with a look of unutterable contempt and disgust, he eyed his companion, who thrust his hands into his ample pockets, and paced up and down the room with rapid strides and determined emphasis. At length, stopping opposite to his irritated companion, he eyed him for some moments, with a look of stern reproach, saying, in a stronger Irish brogue than ever, and with a torrent of indignation, which gave almost the dignity of eloquence to what he uttered,

"You think there are no feelings in the world to be consulted but your own! perhaps

we may prove this a slight mistake! I have married seven of my cousins already to officers quarthered in our neighbourhood at Limerick, and Caroline is the last! Captain Mortimer was introduced to Mary at the top of a country dance, and engaged her for life before he reached the bottom. Lieutenant Murray gave his arm to Bessy for the first time going down to dinner at Mrs Fitz-Patrick's, and offered her his hand before the fish was off the table! We understand these things very soon in Ireland! and I would shed every drop of my blood before Caroline shall be disappointed!"

Captain De Crespigny began now to feel seriously annoyed at his own position! Not having lately been quartered in Ireland, he had forgotten how such affairs are managed there, but at this moment a thousand recollections crowded upon him, of warnings he had received from his brother officers respecting the prudence and circumspection to be exercised beside the Shannon, though most of what they said, had been listened to with the

same incredulous attention usually bestowed upon stories of ghosts and witchcraft. Here he was, however, snared like a fly in a spider's web, though without a single doubt of his own powers to escape, and with no stronger objection to call out this insolent ruffian beside him, than the publicity and ridicule which he must inevitably incur, if involved in a vulgar every-day duel with a hot-headed Irishman.

Seeing that the affair was likely to take a graver turn than he had imagined, Captain De Crespigny now slowly and resolutely strode towards the hearth-rug, and turning his back to the fire, in that attitude peculiar to Englishmen, calmly and sternly looked in the face of his insolent companion, whose lip became compressed with an air of fierce determination, while his dark eye glittered with a triumphant smile, and in an attitude of perfect *nonchalance*, he returned Captain De Crespigny gaze for gaze, while leisurely resuming his lounging attitude on the sofa. Neither gentleman seemed at all inclined to

recommence the discussion immediately, and both looked equally angry, till the Irishman at length opened a pocket-book, to which he frequently afterwards referred, with a business-like air, and in a tone of conscious triumph, saying,

"Will you be afther denying all you said to my cousin only last night?"

"I deny nothing, Sir, except the right you, or any human being can have, with what I choose to say, five minutes after it has been uttered!" replied Captain De Crespigny, almost delirious with rage, and drawing in his breath between his clenched teeth, while the Irishman eyed him with provoking coolness, and merely muttered in reply, while still referring to the pocket-book,

"That is not our way in Limerick! Scarcely one of my cousins had a case like this! Breach of promise! Sure it would fetch a verdict to-morrow; but the shortest way is the best! Why, Sir! you told my cousin, poor girl! that you wished there were not another man on the

earth, in case she might prefer him *to* you!"

"But luckily there are many, or she would have little chance of a husband!" replied Captain De Crespigny, almost beside himself with rage. "I have said the same thing a thousand times, to a thousand different young ladies, without expecting them ever to think of it more!"

The Irishman looked away for a moment, as if some irresistible feeling had come over him, which he could scarcely suppress, and with a slight quiver in his voice, as if on the very eve of laughter, though Captain De Crespigny was too angry to notice it, he sang, while looking out of the window, these words, with very marked emphasis,—

"Erin, oh! Erin's the land of delight,
Where the women all love, and the men they all fight.'

At length, Captain De Crespigny, losing all patience, followed his antagonist to the window, and said, in a tone of angry command,

"Let there be a truce to this most, con-

temptible farce! If you are a gentleman, which I very much doubt, send any respectable friend—a man of honour, if you happen by chance to know such a person—to my barracks, and before to-morrow I shall find, if possible, some blundering Irishman who can understand you, to settle this absurd affair."

"That may soon be done," replied Mr Smythe, "if I am not satisfied with your intentions."

"Intentions!" re-echoed Captain De Crespigny, in a frenzy of contempt. "My intentions were merely to amuse myself for an hour or two with a rather pleasing young lady, and ——."

"Rather pleasing!! you may be proud of your gallanthry!" replied the Irishman, with more real indignation in his voice, than it had yet exhibited. "Perhaps, Sir, being the lady's cousin ——."

"It is no matter who you are! I am not here to be questioned like a member before his constituents. I did not know the young lady had a relation on earth."

"The more shame to you, Sir, for meaning to deceive her!" replied the Irishman in a tone of stern reproach. "If I were to get all Ireland for holding my tongue, you should hear the truth. But maybe you would be afther giving me satisfaction in another way. I'm not such a wild beast as to thirst for blood, if it can be done with pen and ink!"

Captain De Crespigny fixed his eyes with stern contempt upon his free and easy companion, who passed his fingers through his long bushy wig, stretched his leg upon the sofa, and spoke with a yawning voice, while he added in a careless off-hand way, "If my cousin could only be persuaded you meant nothing from first to last, there's an ensign in the 42d, with very good prospects, she might have for the asking! Here is a paper. I prepared it in case you might object to the match; and if you'll only sign this assurance that you meant nothing, for the lady's own satisfaction, you are a free man. It will save us both a deal of bother and fighting. A man who has fought a dozen times like me,

may go out once too often; and my pistols are all at Dublin!"

Captain De Crespigny paused a moment, irresolute what to do. It was a condescension quite intolerable, to have another moment's intercourse with such a man; and to sign any paper at his request, seemed almost a degradation; but then he saw before him a long vista of vulgar annoyances from this forward Irishman. He was aware that hundreds of gentlemen would laugh, if the story got any publicity, and that dozens of young ladies would feel themselves aggrieved, if it became circulated that his attentions had been so very marked to an obscure Miss Smythe.

The tea-tables, the newspapers, the club, and the mess, were all to be dreaded; and seeing that the Irishman had, with an air of perfect *nonchalance*, buried himself behind a double number of the "Times," which he seemed to be attentively reading, Captain De Crespigny glanced his eye over the paper, and finding that it contained only a short and

simple declaration that he never had intended to marry the young lady introduced to him by Sir Arthur Dunbar, he hastily signed his name, tossed the paper contemptuously across the table, and, with infinite dignity, strode out of the house.

Great was his surprise when descending the staircase, to hear in the room he had so recently left, a simultaneous burst of smothered laughter from several persons. He could not be mistaken! It seemed even as if there were female voices in the number; but almost bewildered with anger, and happy also to escape, he hastened onwards, threw himself on horseback, and galloped for three hours before he had regained any portion of his usual equanimity.

Had Captain De Crespigny followed his first impulse, on hearing the laughter behind him, it would have been to retrace his steps, and re-enter the drawing-room of Mrs Smythe, when his astonishment would certainly not have been small, to see Henry De Lancey laughingly disencumbering himself of his

whiskers, wig, and mustachios, while Mrs Smythe exclaimed, in accents of almost convulsive risibility,

"Well done, my adopted nephew! You deserve to be my heir! I have often heard that my old aversion Louis de Crespigny's exploits were inimitable in his line, but we needed such a specimen as this. I bestow the fright upon him, with all the pleasure in life!"

"I only hope, if we ever in the course of years meet again, that my cousin will not recognise me!" added Caroline, smiling. "It was not particularly flattering to see Louis in so much alarm! Yesterday, however, when he saw me last, I was certainly looking my very worst!"

"Your worst is better than the best of anybody else!" exclaimed Henry, in a tone so exactly resembling that of Captain De Crespigny, that Mrs Smythe started, and looked round with alarm; while Caroline, and young De Lancey burst into a simultaneous laugh of frolicsome glee, and con-

tinued the dialogue during several minutes, with great spirit and vivacity, till Henry suddenly became conscious, that in imagining the words of another, he was gradually betrayed into expressing his own real feelings; and that too, with a depth and fervour which sincerity alone could have dictated.

Checking himself in a moment, while the colour rushed to his face, dyeing it red to the very roots of his hair, and instantly receded again, he took a hurried leave of Mrs Smythe, and turning to Caroline with a quivering lip, he said, in a voice which none but herself could hear, "I must not say in jest what I feel in earnest! Farewell! There are wishes known only to my own heart, and never to be realised, which I must try to forget. You go to-morrow, and we shall probably meet no more! Forgive me, then, if I say, that so long as I live, you shall be first in my most respectful and devoted affections; and death only can ever make me forget you."

Before Henry left the ante-room, being in search of his hat, he found it laid beside an

open portfolio on the table, which, having in his haste accidentally thrown down, he began hastily collecting its contents, when his surprise was great, on turning up one sheet of the drawing paper, to find there a finely-executed sketch, done with all the skill and spirit of an accomplished artist, representing the venerable head of Sir Arthur; and on the same paper—could it be possible!—an almost living representation of himself. The likeness very much flattered, he thought—exceedingly flattered; but still it could be no other; and the picture dropped from his hand in the transport of his delight.

Henry again returned to the portfolio, hurriedly turning the leaves over; and amidst a variety of superbly-finished miniatures, he found his own countenance over and over again grouped in animated contrast with that of Sir Arthur. His heart throbbed with joy, when, after hastily turning to the title-page, he discovered, according to his hopes and wishes, the name of Caroline Smythe; and he leaned his head on his hand, contemplat-

ing that name in silent extacy, while indulging for one moment, the pleasing, but perhaps presumptuous hope, that he had been remembered with unacknowledged partiality, and that the secret of Caroline's heart was here portrayed with her own pencil.

He was about then to withdraw, when suddenly the raised and irritated tones of Mrs Smythe became unavoidably audible to him, from the room he had so recently left, saying, in accents of angry remonstrance,

"That look of girlish joy when he comes, and the sadness of your eye when he departs, might betray it to any one less interested than myself; but he has met few ladies hitherto, and on his part it is a mere boyish fancy, which, if properly discouraged, will of itself wear out."

Henry had fled to avoid hearing what was not intended for him, before Caroline replied, in a low, agitated voice,

"I think and hope you are mistaken; but his constancy and disinterestedness shall be tried and proved. I would rather any man

should cut my throat for money, than marry me for it. A girl of fortune, like Midas, turns all who look on her to gold; and I am not a gem to attract many lovers, without a very brilliant setting. I have a romantic desire to be chosen for myself alone—a vain dream perhaps never to be realized, unless young De Lancey prove constant. If not, I mean to declare war upon all mankind,—to be a perfect Captain De Crespigny for flirtations! to talk to gentlemen, ridicule, mortify, and humble them!—to do every thing in short, but love or marry any one of them!"

Though Caroline spoke these words in a tone of lively *badinage*, there was a tremulous bitterness in her manner, as she turned away, and contemptuously threw upon the table a massive gold chain which she usually wore, saying, "Lovers! I'll get fifty, and break the heart of every one of them!"

When Captain De Crespigny next visited Portobello, during a review of his regiment, he was surprised to see the well-remembered windows of Rosemount Villa closed, and a

ticket suspended over the door, intimating that it was "to be sold or let, furnished or unfurnished; entrance immediately; rent moderate!" and with a feeling of relief he dismissed the whole affair from his thoughts, and the whole family of Smythes from his memory for ever, while humming one of his favourite airs,

"It is good to be merry and wise,
It is good to be honest and true;
It is good to be off with the old love,
Before you be on with the new."

CHAPTER IX.

Has sorrow thy young days shaded,
As clouds o'er the morning fleet?
Too fast have those young days faded,
That, even in sorrow, were sweet.

Among the companions of Agnes and Marion Dunbar, none was more calculated to excite a feeling of enthusiastic tenderness and regard than Clara Granville, whom all approached with a feeling of nearly romantic interest, occasioned by the etherealized delicacy of her lovely countenance and fragile form. Sir Patrick, from her earliest childhood, had always mentioned Clara in terms of such exaggerated enthusiasm, that Agnes, imagining his taste to be very different, believed him to

be more than half in jest, though his language and manner seemed daily to become more in earnest, while in terms of rapture he admired her eloquent and intelligent conversation, so different from the flippant nonsense of most girls, and the light gracefulness of her step, saying she looked like some beautiful apparition, less encumbered with body, and more endowed with spirit, than any one who ever before stepped upon the earth. Her pale golden hair, falling like a halo round her fair bright countenance, and the rare beauty of her large downcast eyes, which were generally veiled with a look of deep thought and sensibility, gave a charm so peculiar to her aspect, that the eye loved to dwell upon it as upon some lovely twilight scene, over which the light of heaven was casting its pure and peaceful, yet fading refulgence. None looked at Clara without fearing that she could not be long intended for this world, as the fervour of her mind and feelings appeared so little in proportion to the extreme delicacy of her complexion, which was tinted like a rose-leaf on

her transparent cheek, the colour flitting with every passing emotion. It did indeed seem as if the sword within must quickly wear out the scabbard; yet Clara enjoyed society beyond measure, and mingled in it with a zest which caused Sir Patrick often to say she must be stronger certainly than she looked, and that there was nothing, he thought, more odious in a woman than rude health—a sort of rudeness never certainly attributable to Miss Granville.

Agnes's favourite aversion had always been Clara, formerly her cotemporary and rival at school, though the rivalship was only felt on one side, as Miss Granville would have remained unconscious of its very existence, but for the bitter taunts occasionally levelled at her, and the tone of evident irritability in which Agnes took it always for granted that the jealousy was mutual, attributing thoughts and motives perpetually to her gentle companion, of which so amiable and well-regulated a disposition was incapable. It may generally be observed, that many more quarrels arise

from people wilfully taking offence, than from people wilfully giving it; and there is quite as much ill-temper in the one case as in the other. Clara had suffered much on account of her every inadvertent word or action being purposely misconstrued; but she very properly viewed the annoyance as a salutary lesson in circumspection, before entering the great arena of society, and mildly avoided all collision of interests or opinions with Agnes, though her whole powers of conciliation were worse than useless, if any attentions on the part of Sir Patrick gave his sister reason to apprehend that his affections might by possibility be engaged to her. Nothing could be more painfully irritating than the tone of contempt with which Agnes "spoke at" Clara respecting the art and cunning with which some manœuvring misses endeavoured to push their fortune in the matrimonial world, by making advances to gentlemen, which she would despise herself for condescending to, and that lookers-on see more of the game than is intended. All this was said in such an accidental tone, and in

such general terms, that no decided notice could be taken of it by Clara, who nevertheless felt so painful a consciousness of what was meant and insinuated, that she ceased almost entirely to visit Agnes, or to associate with her.

About the time when Mrs Smythe left Portobello, Sir Patrick returned from spending a month at Lady Towercliffe's in Fife, evidently labouring under a depression of spirits very unusual with him; and when Agnes, perplexed by observing that he did not attempt to throw off the cloud of melancholy, tinged very strongly with ill-humour, which had so suddenly come over him, tried to guess or discover the cause, she found it for some time impossible to gain a glimpse of the truth, though she asked as many questions as might have filled a volume of Pinnock's Catechisms.

At length, after some miscellaneous conversation one day, Agnes inquired for the twentieth time whether the party in Fife had been

agreeable, when Sir Patrick shortly and drily replied,

"Clara Granville was there!"

"But had you any new beauties?"

"Clara Granville!"

"Pshaw! Well, then! were there any agreeable people?"

"Clara Granville!"

"You are beyond all bearing absurd and tormenting, Pat!" continued Agnes, with a contemptuous toss of her head; "but I may at least venture with impunity to ask, were any of the ladies well dressed?"

"Clara Granville!"

"That ends my curiosity on the subject of your visit," replied Agnes, angrily affecting to yawn. "Never try to persuade me you care for Clara. She is the most unflirtable girl in the world! As cold as a statue of ice in an east wind! She has the most tiresome style of prettiness that can be conceived, with that alabaster paleness, that petrifying calmness of manner, and a heart like a cucumber! The

very style of her dress is wearying, with not a colour that one could give a name to; and then her long under-toned tête-á-tête conversations about nobody knows what, as dull and monotonous as a dinner-bell, never enlivened with a bit of gossip, nor spiced with any scandal! There is a whole 'Society for the suppression of vice' in her eye every time she looks at one! She would evidently be terrified for the echo of her own voice, and never yet committed the indiscretion of a laugh!"

"Are you done?" asked Sir Patrick, in a tone of concentrated anger, which would have silenced any one but Agnes.

"Done! I could speak for two hours without telling you half how little I think of Clara Granville!" said she, in a paroxysm of eloquence. "One comfort is, however, she will never take!"

"But Clara has already 'taken,' as you elegantly express yourself," exclaimed Sir Patrick, who had been walking vehemently up and down the room during this tirade from Agnes, and now stood opposite to her, with a

look of angry defiance. "Clara is surpassingly lovely! Her portrait should be the frontispiece to Finden's next Book of Beauty! She has the loveliness of a seraph!"

"Certainly, if you mean that she looks as if the first breath of wind would blow her down! like an overgrown geranium, that should be tied up to a stick!"

"Clara is delicate and graceful as the first frail blossoms of spring," interrupted Sir Patrick. "She has but one fault in the world, and that is, being faultless! Clara is worth a whole creation of ordinary girls! That look of mild serenity, and those deep, thoughtful eyes, looking as serene as the blue firmament above. Her every attitude is what a Guido might have delighted to paint. Agnes, there is music and rapture in every tone of her voice! At Lady Towercliffe's no one was looked at, nor spoken to, but Miss Granville! She stole into all hearts, without any man guessing his danger till too late! Everybody admired, or, I should rather say, loved her!"

"You are 'everybody,' then, I suppose, for I never heard of any one else, who for half a moment thought her tolerable. All this nonsense is merely to tease me, Pat. Do confess it at once, and be serious!"

"That I never am when I can help it!"

"Well, then, let it always be a jest, and I have no objection to call up a laugh, if it be your humour; but I would engage to walk out of the world at once, whenever Clara has a serious, downright proposal from any presentable-looking man, such as one would not be ashamed to sit in a room with!"

"What do you think of me, Agnes?" asked Sir Patrick, walking straight up to her and looking his sister full in the face, with a momentary attempt to be facetious, while his countenance betrayed considerable agitation. "Would you be much astonished if I had made her an offer?"

"Nonsense, Pat! I would disown you for a brother! Now, do not look like an ogre at me! You will say any absurdity in jest!"

"You know, Agnes, I have been a month

in the house lately with Clara!" replied Sir Patrick, in a voice which sounded by no means like jest; "and that month was more than a lifetime in showing me the worth of a real and heartfelt attachment. Even I, mercenary as I am, could value it more than gold! I date the beginning of my existence from the hour I first knew her. There is a depth of mind and heart in the character of Clara Granville, utterly incomprehensible to ordinary observers. She does everything well, and says everything with a grace peculiarly her own. Her manner is the very essence of fascination. Every other person seems coarse and vulgar in comparison; and I even feel so myself! I know you will treat me to a cannonade of abuse against Clara; but that is no matter now," added Sir Patrick, in a tone of deep dejection; "perhaps it may do me good!"

"Wonders occur every hour of every day, but this is the greatest of all!" observed Agnes, drily. "I never thought you would commit such a piece of disinterested non-

sense, as to fall in love, gratis, with any penniless girl, and least of all with Clara. If you were to choose among all the young ladies I know, blindfold, you could scarcely choose any one more unsuitable! If this indeed be true, Clara may be proud of her conquest!"

"She ought!" replied Sir Patrick, glancing at his own magnificent head in a mirror; "but being in many respects peculiar, she by no means appreciated the honour as you expect!"

"You are possessed by the very genius of nonsense to-day, Pat! but if such a catch as you were to fall in Clara Granville's way, I should like to see her, and all her family, not more than happy on the occasion!"

"Well then! open your ears of astonishment, Agnes! She has actually rather refused me than otherwise! I am positively more in love with Clara, than language can express! I could pursue her to the very ends of the earth! I must, and shall marry her! I would shoot myself to-morrow, if I

thought there could be a doubt of it," exclaimed Sir Patrick, vehemently, while Agnes became gradually as grave as night. "Clara at first actually accepted me! She was your sister-in-law elect, for three long and happy weeks, and I did not think life could have given me so much to live for; but she afterwards most perversely and unaccountably revoked! What do you think was the reason, Agnes, of all reasons in the world?"

"I am bad at guessing absurdities," replied Agnes, who would have hurled a more angry answer at her brother, had she dared. "Whatever might be the cause, it was very lucky for you, who may, if you know your own value, make the first match in the kingdom!"

"Well, then! actually that she thought my religious principles not sufficiently serious! That her brother disapproved of my morals and conduct! I offered her any terms! To attend chapel with her once every Sunday; to refrain from Sunday dinners, and Sunday travelling! Not even to

ride out on horseback that day; and, in short, to pass Sir Andrew's whole Sunday bill in my house; but it did not satisfy her! What would they have!" continued Sir Patrick, gnawing his lip with vexation. "I gave her a *carte blanche* to put my name down as a subscriber to as many tract, missionary, and slave-abolition societies, as she pleased, and asked her how many distressed families she wished me to maintain."

"How excessively handsome!" said Agnes, satirically. "All I need say is, it was very genteel!"

"Yet Clara persevered in giving me a plump decline! No wonder you look incredulous! I can scarcely yet believe it myself! This shall not last, however! I felt piqued at first, and left her. I am always too soon, or too late, in all I do; but it must be tried again and again! I would rather live without the sun and stars, than without Clara Granville! The very repetition of her name is a pleasure! Agnes, what can you do to assist me!"

"Assist! I shall do everything in the world to bring you back to your senses, Pat! Rather than see that grave, priggish, matter-of-fact Clara, my sister-in-law, I would —— ——."

Agnes could not, at the moment, think of any illustration sufficiently strong to exemplify her abhorrence of such a catastrophe, and twisted her ringlets over her finger for some moments, in dignified and portentous silence. At length she said, with an air of supreme contempt, "You know, Pat! Clara Granville has not a shilling in the wide world!—never had! At school she used to be like a bale of cotton from the manufactories; cotton stockings, pink gingham frocks. and horrid grey beaver gloves! She once had a silk dress, and it was turned, I think, three times!"

"Fiddlesticks and nonsense! So much the better! She will be an excellent wife for a poor man; and poor enough I shall soon be! You need not argue with a milestone, but put a good face on the matter in time, Agnes;

for during all the four thousand years that men have been falling in love, and marrying, I believe no one ever did so merely to please his sister, and I am not the man to begin! In most respects, I may, perhaps, be sordidly anxious for money, but in the matter of love I have taken the whim of being disinterested. If Clara had the Bank of England for her portion, I could not love her more. As for heiresses, I hear that the only one worth a thought, Miss Howard Smytheson, with her million a-year, is bespoke to order for De Crespigny."

"Perhaps he has taken the whim of being disinterested also!" replied Agnes, arranging a favourite curl with great complacency at the mirror. "His uncle is very arbitrary; and like all uncles, continues for ever to think his nephew a perfect boy. He threatened lately to marry himself, if Captain De Crespigny declined! That old dot has some spirit! He seems not to be aware that there is such a thing in the world for himself as a refusal; and certainly, Pat, I can

scarcely fancy the woman in existence who could refuse you. I hardly know whether to wonder most that Clara had the opportunity, or that she had the inclination!

"The whim will wear off! She loves me, that is certain; but if she even hated me, it would make no difference in my attachment. I like her the better for showing some spirit, and great disinterestedness. Clara's conduct was, like herself, beautiful. Her affections are mine! I see it, and no earthly power can tear her from me! I would follow her to the very grave."

Sir Patrick did not by any means find Clara's resolutions, which were formed upon principle, of such very malleable materials as he had prophesied. His own feelings were, on all occasions, like a whirlwind; and his eagerness, excited to excess by opposition, became unbounded to meet Clara, or to catch the most distant glimpse of her shadow,—but in vain. Day after day he contrived to pass beneath her window, but she had adopted invisibility; and evening after evening he

obliged Agnes, greatly against her inclination, to send the very kindest notes of invitation, which he dictated himself, asking her to the house; but the polite apology which was invariably returned, might almost have been lithographed, it became so frequently necessary; yet still Sir Patrick persevered and hoped, saying one day, in a voice of irritability and depression, to Agnes, "It seems as if we were never destined to see Clara again!"

"That would be too much happiness," exclaimed Agnes peevishly; twisting Clara's last reply into a thousand shapes and tossing it into the fire. "This is all so like you, Pat! You invent a thousand reasons for wishing something till it is obtained, and then you care for it no more! If Clara Granville consented, you would be, like Sir Peter Teazle, 'the most miserable man alive before people were done wishing you joy!' Men are all so changeable and selfish!"

"Whether are men or women most selfish, I should like to know?"

"Men, decidedly! From six years old,

till sixty, they seem born and brought up to think of no one's comfort but their own, and they always marry to please themselves!"

"Of course! and very right they should!"

Agnes had now got upon a favourite subject of declamation, the selfishness of mankind,—for those who are selfish or ill-tempered themselves, live always under the delusion that they are the only persons living entirely exempt from such faults,—but her eloquence now soon left her "in possession of the house," as Sir Patrick made a rapid retreat, followed by that very effective slamming of the door, so infallible a receipt for obtaining the last word in an argument, and for asserting in undoubted terms, a very decided view of the subject in question.

Though Sir Patrick Dunbar had long been known as a Tattersall and Doncaster man, yet Clara Granville had little suspected that his name was implicated in transactions of rather an equivocal complexion, while the good-natured half of the world persevered in calling it scandal, being unwilling very

severely to censure the peccadilloes of the handsomest and most agreeable man in their circle of society, living only for the enjoyment of the senses and the happiness of the present hour, while he thought it too long a look-out to anticipate what might happen the day after to-morrow. In respect to Sir Patrick's reputation, a vague understanding seemed to prevail that all was not right, yet no explicit explanation seemed ever to be obtained.

> Something there was —— what, none presumed to say,
> Clouds lightly passing as the summer day.

There are not only faults in the very best characters, but redeeming qualities also in the very worst, and with much selfishness, the result of a perverted education, the handsome and fascinating Sir Patrick had naturally a good temper and excitable affections, though these were wound up occasionally to the wildest excess, while his fortune was not more recklessly squandered than his attachment in the momentary impulse of an hour.

As, therefore, no man is so thoroughly ex-

cellent as to be without errors, neither is any living mortal so depraved as to be without virtues, and the utmost extreme, in one respect or the other, will only be perfected in an eternal world. It often seems to an observer, as if two opposite beings had been kneaded into one, since qualities so contradictory may be traced in the same individual.

Though Sir Patrick Dunbar was eager and rapacious in acquiring money, and would incur any meanness to avoid paying it, he seemed, nevertheless, lavish, and what some people mis-called generous, in squandering what he called his own. Though cold and selfish in general, some fine impulses had been in his nature, which proved him capable of vehement, persevering, and passionate attachment, where his affections, or rather his fancy, had been once engaged; while, at the same time, he was more ashamed to testify any feeling than he would have been to commit a crime, and endeavoured to blind people towards that sensibility which was in reality the redeeming point in his character, by talking

often with the utmost contempt and even ridicule of all those for whom he might have been supposed to feel the weakness of a real attachment.

Sir Patrick had indeed been, what his companions called, "fairly caught" by Clara; and his heart, till now hermetically sealed against all real confidence and friendship, was now for the first time unclosed, in its inmost recesses, while even his hackneyed mind seemed to catch a ray of light and warmth from the sunny freshness and purity of Clara's intellectual mind. Her intelligent conversation, enlivened by a vein of sly pleasing humour, had completely taken him by surprise, being as fresh and gentle as a summer breeze, while her appearance, so young, timid, and lovely, caused the eye to rest on her with a sentiment of almost melancholy interest. Clara had only emerged from school, finally, a few days before Sir Patrick met her at Lady Towercliffe's, and her extreme *naïveté* was her first attraction, though that was superseded before long by still greater ad-

miration, while he became hourly more fasci-nated by her melancholy songs and thought-ful conversation.

To Clara, Sir Patrick had only hitherto been known as a school companion of her brother's, but so conscientiously did Richard Granville invariably abstain from evil-speak-ing, that, even where justice might have war-ranted the severest censure, he merely became silent. It is observable that, in the wisdom of Providence, nothing is made in vain. Even the very weeds that encumber our path have, when under proper restraint, their important uses, and in the mind of man, the tendency implanted by nature, to discuss and criticize the conduct of others, has, when properly ex-ercised, its own advantages, by acting as a salutary restraint on the conduct of those who would otherwise do evil with impunity, and by also giving a timely warning, and hanging out a beacon-light to those who would otherwise trust their interest and hap-piness where such confidence was unmerited, and where all contact is dangerous.

Captain De Crespigny's jilting propensities were the less dangerous, from their being so generally discussed in society, as few were willing that the unwary should suffer, rather than his faults be exposed to censure; but Mr Granville, by not giving his sister timely warning against the dissipated extravagance and almost infidel principles of his old school-companion, had now unfortunately exposed her to a danger he had not anticipated, as it never occurred to his imagination, in its wildest fancies, that the reckless dissolute Sir Patrick, who had long sneered at marriage, and even broken that holy tie for others, might find a charm in the pure, calm, high-minded Clara, which raised him above his ordinary self, and made him appear all she could most like or admire. During their earlier intercourse, she saw nothing in his conversation to disapprove, because Sir Patrick most unintentionally deceived her into a belief of his being very different from what he really was, owing to the respect with which he treated all her opinions, and only

when he talked to others did she become startled occasionally by the tone of careless defiance with which he spoke of all those persons and things which she was most accustomed to reverence and esteem. Before long his attachment had become so unbounded that, conscious he could not obtain Clara's hand if she knew his real character, he assumed all that seemed most likely to secure her confidence, and, for the pleasure of being with her, attended church regularly on Sunday at the village. Clara was astonished at his evident ignorance of the forms of devotion; yet knowing his education had been finished by a clergyman, she supposed he must have imbibed a due respect for the ordinances; while Lady Towercliffe, indulging her usual jobbing propensities, was enchanted to make up a match of any kind in her own house, and praised Sir Patrick as the most immaculate and perfect of men.

Clara's intimacy with Sir Patrick had been continually increasing for some time, before his attention became so very obvious as to ex-

cite her peculiar interest, or to make her conscious of a necessity for inquiring into the state of her own heart; but, upon doing so, she became instantly aware of the deep hold he had acquired over her thoughts and affections. His frank, off-hand, good-humoured manner had pleased her, his amusing conversation had enlivened her, and at length his ardent professions of attachment interested her deeply, being expressed with all the eloquence of natural feeling.

Clara, in the gloomy recesses of Mrs Penfold's school-room, had learned nothing of the world, and her heart at once, therefore, endowed Sir Patrick with all those amiable qualities which he assumed, while she yielded herself to the most pleasing of all earthly dreams, that of loving and being beloved by one who seemed to deserve and to return her attachment; while her sole hesitation in accepting the offer he soon after made of his hand, arose from her doubts whether, in the chief essential to mutual happiness, in religious faith, hope, and morality, they were so

far of similar mind as to afford a well-grounded prospect of happiness.

In almost undoubting confidence of a satisfactory answer, Clara wrote to consult her brother, then studying for holy orders at Oxford, in whose opinion, on all occasions, she implicitly relied; and it was with grief and astonishment, which no words could describe, that she received a reply, in which Mr Granville, with affectionate earnestness reproached himself for not having explicitly laid open to her the character of his former companion and *ci-devant* friend, who was, he grieved to say, a ruined gamester, a bankrupt in fame, as much as in fortune, dreaded by the most respectable among women, and shunned by the most respectable among men, even by his kind, indulgent, but high-minded uncle, Sir Arthur. An open scoffer frequently at the decencies of life, and still more at its most sacred duties and hopes. "Sir Patrick makes no secret of his profligacy," continued Mr Granville, "showing the most flagrant dishonesty in the only way a gentleman can be

tempted to do so, by not paying his debts, while many poor tradesmen have already been ruined by his extravagance, and he has openly entered into a perfect crusade against religion and morality. In short, my dear Clara, Sir Patrick is by no means to be trusted with the happiness of another, and least of all with yours, being a confirmed roué, still pursuing the very wildest career of unprincipled dissipation. Many have already had reason to mourn they ever trusted him or knew him, for he is the very reverse of all you believe and wish. It would be extravagant to waste a hope upon the reformation of a reckless libertine, who thus outrages every law of God and man, and often have you and I agreed, that it was a thing not to be conceived, a woman who rightly valued her immortal soul, placing herself under the authority and influence of a husband who did not! The risk is too great, and how much better to suffer now the sorrow of a separation, than to endure the long agony of an unsuitable union, for which your own heart and conscience would conti-

nually upbraid you. If the tenderest affection of a brother can in any degree compensate for the sacrifice, you need not be told. my dear Clara, that I shall bestow it upon you more lavishly than ever, and it will be my first earthly wish, as well as my sacred duty, to render you happier than you could ever be with a man of principles ——, or rather of no principles, —— like Sir Patrick."

Had the grave opened at Clara's feet, she could scarcely have been more startled and astonished, than by the contents of this most unforeseen letter, the first unwelcome line ever received from Richard. She could have borne anything but to find her lover unprincipled or unworthy, and a wintry chill seemed to gather round her heart, while, with a stifled groan which struggled for utterance, she covered her face with her hand, and sank back upon a sofa. By a powerful effort Clara preserved herself from fainting,—she was resolved not to faint, and she did not,—but in the secret chamber of her heart, all was darkness, loneliness, and grief. Visions of earthly hap-

piness had glittered for a time in brightest colouring before her mind, but now they must be blotted out by her tears. They all lay prostrate and disfigured at her feet, scorched and blasted as if by lightning, and her heart, bewildered by a multitude of thoughts and emotions, seemed full almost to bursting.

Clara wept many bitter tears over her letter, and she not only wept but acted. Without delay, Clara prepared to return to the relation with whom, during her brother's absence, she usually found a home; and before her departure, not only wrote to Sir Patrick, stating in terms of touching grief, all her reasons for so suddenly and unwillingly withdrawing from her engagement to him; but she had a long and most afflicting interview with him, vainly endeavouring to convince her lover, that their total incompatibility of sentiment raised a barrier between them, which forbade the possibility of their union.

Sir Patrick became nearly frantic with vexation, while he could not but admire the

beautiful grace of her manner, and the sorrowful modulations of her voice when she spoke, yet unconscious how completely the gentle Clara was ruled by principle as with a sceptre of iron, he seemed utterly unable to comprehend why his talking carelessly, or even contemptuously of religion, should in any degree affect the preference which she had once confessed for him; and which he felt assured she still entertained. With passionate vehemence he urged the depth of his attachment, and his total indifference to everything in life but herself, while he warmly protested that she, and she only, could complete the reformation which her own influence had already begun.

"You love me, Clara, and would cast me off for ever! Impossible! Let us forget all my early indiscretions,—my vices then if it must be so,—but why should every leaf of my past life be turned over now! Since we met I have been an altered being! I am astonished even at myself! If I have deceived you, it is because I deceived myself, but now I am en-

tirely in your power. Use it then kindly, and forget all but my attachment; I have staked my whole happiness in life on the hope of your accepting me. The wish to deserve you shall be a sufficient motive to fit me for all the duties of life. Without you I shall have no object, no hope, not even a home, for never more shall I have one unless you share it. Clara, let me throw myself on your compassion, if not on your love."

"Oh no!" said Clara, hurriedly, yet with a look of pale and tearful distress, "I dare not hesitate! All must be as I have said. It will be most for the happiness of both!"

"Happiness! speak not to me of happiness without you! It is a mockery! Every tie to peace or virtue would then be ruptured."

"There are better ties to virtue, and stronger," whispered Clara, in a faltering voice, while she gasped for utterance, and a glow like sunset was on her cheek.

"No! no! not for me! There may be amusement, frivolity, gayety, and dissipation; but I never understood the real meaning of

happiness till we met. My whole thoughts, feelings, and character have been revolutionised to please you, Clara, but your influence alone could snatch me from evil,—from myself,—from all on which I have hitherto wasted my existence. For your sake, and for yours alone, I could be all, and more than you wish. Years spent in your society shall prove the extent of your influence."

"By trusting to such a hope, many, like me, have wrecked their whole peace both now and hereafter," said Clara, trying to speak with firmness, but her voice became almost inaudible. "If it were the same thing to will, as to do, I have not a doubt of your sincerity; but the mere resolution to change established habits, unless the power be derived from above, is only an air-built castle to which I dare not trust. It would be easy still to indulge myself in romantic schemes of domestic happiness, such as I have lately anticipated, but these hopes could only be blossoms without root or durability, unless they arise from firm principles of religion. Without such a

cement happiness has neither worth nor durability."

"Clara! you have never loved as I do!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, reproachfully. "I never did, and never can express half what I feel; but you do not yet know the heart you so cruelly undervalue! It seems now as if you would rather cut off your hand than bestow it on me!"

"Perhaps in future years—" stammered Clara. "We are both young; and if, for your own sake, you alter in some respects, we might yet look forward to—to—"

"Speak not of delay! that is worse than death! I never in my life could endure suspense! No! it must—it shall be now, or never!"

"Never, then," replied Clara, in a low, husky, indistinct voice, while, in spite of herself, tears rolled over her face. "It ought indeed to be never! Forget me, as if I were already dead! I must only consent to pass my life with a confirmed and consistent Christian, completely master of himself and of his ac-

tions. If we lived for each other, I should have a thousand anxieties, regrets, and sorrows, which you could neither foresee nor understand! Oh no! I must only love on earth one whom I may hope to love hereafter for ever!"

"Must it be my misfortune, Clara, to have known you?" exclaimed Sir Patrick, with agitated energy. "Do you not see that with me, to know excellence is to love it, and that if we were constantly together, I should always be like you. The loss of honour, fortune, or reputation, I might endure; but your loss I cannot, and will not. Tell me, then, are my whole affections to be buried in darkness, never to see a dawn?"

"If my happiness in this world only were at hazard, I would venture all for your sake!" replied Clara, in a low, gentle, tremulous voice. "I feel grateful for your attachment—more than grateful; but marriage is so very awful and sacred a tie! to devote every earthly thought, every feeling, every hope, every hour of my life to one! I could not and dare not

enter on such a duty, without a perfect and unalterable confidence. I feel, that to be united in love and duty where I did not esteem, is a misfortune I could not survive—which I could scarcely even wish to survive. In giving you my heart, as I have already done, I ventured my all of worldly happiness on that one stake, and have lost it; but there are better hopes and higher duties, which bind me to follow them, even though death were the consequence."

Sir Patrick clenched his hands vehemently together, while his countenance burned, and muttering a curse between his teeth, which chilled the blood of Clara in her veins, he walked about the room with rapidly increasing excitement, till at length, stopping before her, he said in accents of angry reproach, "You have spoken my doom, Clara; and only from your own lips would I have believed it."

Clara buried her face in her hands, and feeling that her high-wrought fortitude was giving way, she hurried towards the door;

but as she tremblingly endeavoured to open it, Sir Patrick again seized her hand, saying, "You are mine, Clara; you are bound by a promise that must not be broken!"

"I shall never give myself to another," said she, still hastening away. "Be happy in making others happy. May you yet find one who loves you as I have done, and who shall not hereafter find the same reasons for giving you up. I shall pray for you, and rejoice in all the good I hear. Farewell."

No words could do justice to the silent agony of Clara's young heart, when in solitary grief she retraced her whole intimacy with Sir Patrick, and reflected that she had bid a last adieu to one whom she must not esteem, and yet could not but love. All that this world could offer she had rejected for conscience sake. A cold frost seemed to gather around her spirit, while trembling and depressed, she viewed the desolation of all her lately cherished hopes; and amidst the ruined fabric of her happiness, she now seemed like some solitary pillar, surrounded by the broken fragments of

what once supported and adorned it; yet summoning to her aid that Christian firmness, which in her amounted to heroism, she gazed on the shattered wreck, without a wish to restore it at the sacrifice of principle, determined, as far as her sensitive nature would admit, to adopt the rule of an aged and experienced Christian, "Hope nothing, fear nothing, expect anything, and be prepared for everything!"

CHAPTER X.

Thus always teasing others, always teased,
The only pleasure is, to be displeased."
COWPER

YEARS having thus rolled on, bringing joy to some, and laying sorrow more or less on all, Marion Dunbar, fresh in the spring-tide of youthful bloom, had nearly completed her seventeenth year, and was hurrying on still in a whirlpool of education at Mrs Penfold's, exerting herself more zealously for the credit of her teachers than she ever would have done for her own.

One evening about this time, a message reached Marion, desiring that she would instantly hasten to Mrs Penfold's private sit-

ting-room, which was on all extraordinary occasions that lady's hall of audience, and a solemn summons to which was usually of ominous import. Marion, however, conscious that her own recent diligence had been quite pre-eminent, and her success most distinguished, heard the word of command with a flutter of pleasing anticipation, for to her the future was always full of hope. Too old now for medals and ribbons, she yet indulged in the gay recollection of former triumphs, and remembered, with a smile, as she hurried up stairs, how often Sir Arthur had formerly declared, while pretending to frown upon her, that "he hated to see girls flouncing about with medals, and defying the world!" yet how slily, when she one day entered his drawing-room, with deepening colour, and a look of modest consciousness, half concealing and half displaying her honours, he had advanced to meet her, wearing his own Grand Cross of the Bath, to prove, as he said, that he was indeed fit company for so meritorious a young lady.

Humming a favourite air, with a buoyant joyful step, and radiant smile, Marion hastened to the door of Mrs Penfold's apartment, where, after trying to compose her features into a suitable expression of sober respect, with dimpling cheek, and still almost laughing eyes, she entered, making, as she had been taught, the usual respectful courtesy exacted by Mrs Penfold, such as might have been suitable for an introduction at Court, or for a public performer receiving the plaudits of a numerous audience, and then, with a bright speaking look, full of hope and vivacity, she paused, to ascertain the object of her unexpected summons.

To Marion's astonishment and dismay, Mrs Penfold was pacing about the room, evidently in a state of furious irritation, while in her hand she carried that endless bill, the growth of many years, for board, education, masters, and sundries, which had so often already greeted the unwilling eyes of her young pupil, whose whole inward spirit recoiled with shame and apprehension, while she silently

measured the length and breadth of its contents, every item of which she already knew by heart, and could almost have recapitulated without a prompter.

Had Marion herself been a ruined gamester or a spendthrift, she could scarcely have felt more guilty and ashamed than now; but after standing an entire minute without being observed, and perceiving Mrs Penfold unable to speak, from the effort it cost to restrain her anger within decent bounds, Marion, with the frankness natural to her candid disposition, came at once to the point, saying, with heightened colour, and scarcely articulate voice, while her beautiful deep intelligent eyes were fixed with an earnest gaze on Mrs Penfold.

"I fear no satisfactory answer has come this term from my brother?"

"No! nor there never will be!" thundered Mrs Penfold, in a voice that made the gentle Marion absolutely cower before her. "There, Miss Dunbar! look at that bill!" added she, flinging it furiously into the lap of Marion,

who had sunk upon a seat. "How much will a shilling in the pound be for that? Four hundred guineas absolutely lost—wasted—squandered upon you!"

Unable to speak from consternation, though such scenes were already but too familar to her memory, Marion fixed her eyes on the unwelcome bill, apparently examining its contents, while her thoughts were in the mean time painfully occupied in devising what would be right for her to say or do in this unexpected crisis. A long pause ensued, during which Mrs Penfold seemed resolute not to speak; therefore Marion, with a strenuous effort, endeavoured to new-string her nerves, and say something, while the large heavy tears forced themselves into her eyes.

"Mrs Penfold," replied she earnestly, "you know how ready I would be to send my brother another letter of remonstrance, if that could be of any avail, but now he never so much as answers me. I seem indeed to be quite forgotten by both Patrick and Agnes!"

Marion paused to recover her voice, and to

choke back her tears, after which she continued in a firmer tone, while Mrs Penfold listened, with a dry, harsh, unmoved expression of countenance.

"You are justly dissatisfied about my brother's payments, but if there be the least cause to doubt your being ultimately remunerated, send me immediately home. I dare not go of myself, but you have power to dismiss me, and let it be done. The sorrow and mortification must all be mine, but whatever falls on myself alone, I shall always be able to bear."

"Miss Dunbar! you have anticipated exactly what I am obliged to do, and what it would have been well for me if I had done sooner!" replied Mrs Penfold, angrily flouncing into a chair, and pirouetting it almost round, so as to look Marion full in the face. "I am sorry for you certainly, because, though your music is not yet exactly such as to do me much credit, and your Italian is sometimes far from grammatical, yet on the whole there cannot be a better-disposed girl,

nor one who has testified a more constant desire to please me."

Marion's heart was melted by even this very slight expression of regard, and nothing could exceed the troubled beauty of her eyes, when she raised them gratefully to Mrs Penfold, but conscious that her presence was not exactly the place for a scene, as that lady had long been considered incapable of a tear or a smile, she averted her face, and struggled for composure.

"I have learned for the first time to-day," resumed Mrs Penfold, her voice becoming more stern as she proceeded, "that before your father's death, Sir Patrick twice, in the most profligate manner, paid off his creditors with a shilling in the pound! In consequence of great losses now at the Doncaster races, and having paid what he calls his debts of honour to a ruinous amount, Sir Patrick has yesterday fled to the sanctuary at Holyrood House for refuge, and the creditors have already seized everything. No wonder indeed! it was full time! He is all promise and no

performance,—for ever feeding us with empty spoons!"

Mrs Penfold angrily changed her position, and with another indignant glance at Marion, continued,

"Even Sir Patrick's large rent-roll would scarcely suffice in a life-time to pay the half of us off. Good worthy Sir Arthur too, his own uncle, he has cheated, and the property being entailed, we have only Sir Patrick's life to depend upon for what he owes us! This is a very heavy blow to me, and extremely hard to bear!"

While thus bemoaning herself, Mrs Penfold forgot, like most selfish people, that any one had to suffer besides, though the parted lips, the tearful eyes, and the pallid cheek of Marion testified in a language not to be mistaken, the depth and intensity of her grief, while with astonishment and dismay, she heard this short summary of Sir Patrick's history and circumstances.

Long after Mrs Penfold had ceased to speak, Marion gazed in her face, as if expect-

ing more, while her every nerve continued quivering with agitation, till at length she closed her eyes in speechless agony, bewildered by the sudden transition from joyful anticipation to blank despair. Formerly she had heard of difficulties and bankruptcies, as she had heard of the plague or the bow-string at Constantinople—things dreadful to those who might be affected by them, but quite foreign to herself, and now, like a clap of thunder, all had suddenly burst over the heads of those who were nearest and dearest to her, with apparently destructive effect. She yet felt as if the whole were some hideous dream from which it might be possible to awaken,—the voice of Mrs Penfold rang painfully on her ears,—every surrounding object faded from her vision,—her thoughts became confused,—a vague sense of burning misery was at her heart,—and one only wish remained distinctly prominent on her mind—the wish to be alone.

"Indeed, Miss Dunbar," continued Mrs Penfold, in a monotonous complaining voice,

"no wonder you are shocked that I who have laboured so hard to realise a small independence, should be swindled out of it in this way by your brother. Lady Towercliffe tells me that among his intimate friends he is known by the nick-name of 'Sixpenny Dunbar!' on account of his having so often already played a similar game, but once catch him beyond the bounds of Holyrood now, and he'll never be at liberty to try such manœuvres again. We are to offer a reward of L.500 for his apprehension!"

"My poor uncle and Agnes!" exclaimed Marion, in a voice of anguish, while hot tears fell like rain over her cheek, and a confused apprehension of ruin, bankruptcy, and disgrace hovered darkly through her mind, though she scarcely yet knew what to think or to fear. "I must go home, if I yet have a home! Wherever they are, let me find them! I must see my uncle,—Patrick cannot be all you say! oh no! It is some dreadful mistake! Whatever happens, I trust and hope, Mrs Penfold, you will be repaid. It shall be

my first earthly wish—my duty sooner or later, to see it done! Now let me go instantly home!"

Mrs Penfold most heartily seconded her pupil's desire to depart, while one of the heaviest pangs which Marion had to endure on this occasion, sprang from the stern angry coldness with which her *ci-devant* preceptress appeared about to bid her a last farewell.

A tumult of gossiping wonder and curiosity arose among the pupils, when it became whispered that Marion was to "leave" on an hour's notice. Many questions were asked, much astonishment was expressed, and even a great deal of real sympathy excited, but Marion shrank from the clamorous exclamations of her young companions, who could not so much as guess the measure and depth of her misfortunes. Often had she shared their sorrows, and willingly would she have accepted any consolation they could offer, but the worst of her trials could not be spoken to mortal ears, and in lamenting for her brother's disgrace, she could only bear

her wound, like a stricken deer, into solitude and silence.

There are insects that live a life-time in an hour, and it seemed to Marion as if she had really done so, since the time when sparkling with gladness, she flew to Mrs Penfold's presence. Now, heavy with sorrow and anxiety, she slowly retraced her steps, and on reaching her room, sank upon the bed in a paroxysm of tears, delivering herself up to many painful thoughts, or rather to her feelings, for she could not think amidst the tumult of an agitated mind, when suffering thus under the most painful of all transitions, from hope to despair.

It was during the unoccupied half-hour after dinner, when Mrs Penfold allowed her pupils a gasp of rest from their labours during the day, that they gathered in groups at every window, to criticise a hackney-coach and very tired broken-down looking horses in waiting, while the pupils all watched for Marion's departure, anxious to catch a last glimpse of their favourite companion. She

had been shut up alone, ever since her interview with Mrs Penfold, and tried to occupy herself in packing up her few possessions, while endeavouring to compose her mind; both of which tasks occupied more time than she wished or expected. But all was now over, and trying to assume an aspect of serenity, with pale cheeks and swollen eyes, she entered the school-room, carrying in her hand a large and very heavy-looking casket.

The young community crowded round to say a thousand affectionate farewells, when, for a moment, Marion looked at them all with her own beautiful smile, but unable to control her emotion, she turned away her head, and burst into an agony of tears.

"Miss Dunbar, my dear! the sooner this is all over the better!" said Mrs Penfold, hastily advancing, with a look of irritable vexation. "No wonder you are sorry to leave us; but what can't be cured must be endured. Remember to be diligent in practising your music, as the success of my establishment depends on the conduct of all my

young ladies. The only recompense I am ever likely to receive for my care, will proceed from your attention not to do me any discredit. Now, farewell, my dear, and try to bear up the best way you can!"

"Mrs Penfold!" faltered Marion, while a flash of bright intelligence lighted up her eyes; "allow me, for a single moment, to see you alone!"

"No! no! my dear! I hate scenes; therefore let us now take leave. I wish you well!" added Mrs Penfold, in a tone that sounded marvellously sincere. "I really do! Whatever has happened is your misfortune, not your fault!"

"One single word, if you please," whispered Marion, colouring the deepest carnation, and leading the way to an inner room, while Mrs Penfold followed, with an air of royal condescension. "The fault is indeed, as you kindly remark, not my own; but for my sake, Mrs Penfold, spare my brother's name in all you say. It gives me pleasure to think that I can do something towards settling our ac-

count myself; and I would think no sacrifice worth a thought, that enabled me to do so. My mother's trinkets were divided between Agnes and me; besides which my dear kind uncle has been lavish in his gifts. This gold repeater cost a great sum, and that locket is set in diamonds."

"Well, my dear!" interrupted Mrs Penfold, relaxing into a look of graciousness, "such honourable sentiments show that you have not been under my care in vain; and though these pretty trifles are not equivalent to what you owe, yet half a loaf is better than no bread!"

"All that I ever possessed, the gifts or legacies of friends and relations, I leave in pledge with you, Mrs Penfold, as an assurance, that if brighter days ever come, I would redeem them at twenty times their value. Keep these till then. Whatever ornaments I might ever wear, would be a reproach till you are paid. Some debts never can be sufficiently discharged, and among these is what I owe to your care during many past years."

The bright eyes of Marion were dimmed with tears of sincerity and emotion, when she concluded; and, placing the casket in Mrs Penfold's astonished hands, she hastened out of the room. Giving a last long look at those inanimate objects to which she had been accustomed, and feeling that even to these she could not without regret bid a final adieu, Marion threw herself into the carriage, and drove off, so overpowered with anguish and anxiety respecting her brother, that she scarcely noticed the phalanx of white pocket handkerchiefs, waved to her as a last farewell from those beloved companions, among whom so large a share of her young affections had hitherto been lavished; and thus she took a final farewell of Mrs Penfold's finishing seminary for young ladies, where she was never destined to be finished!

CHAPTER XI.

"Pleasure is a very pleasant thing."

The storm around might roar and rustle,
He did na' mind the storm a whistle?

BURNS.

MARION Dunbar being by no means an arrant novel reader, knew nothing of those artificial feelings which too often obliterate the reality. Simple as a field-flower, her natural sensibility remain perfectly fresh and unimpaired, while now, for the first time, experiencing the withering disappointments, and blighting anxieties of life.

As she drove slowly along towards the sanctuary where Sir Patrick had taken re-

fuge, the most prominent apprehension on her mind, was that of finding him on the eve of imprisonment; but she in some degree consoled herself by imagining the services that in such circumstances she might perhaps be able to do him, and the privations she could endure for his sake. The more proud, overbearing, and arbitrary, he had hitherto been, the more touching it appeared to her affectionate spirit, that one who seemed born to command, should now be so humbled; and impatiently did she long to prove, that, however all things might alter, yet, in prosperity or adversity, in sickness or in health, she was unchangeably the same; while her young heart glowed with the paramount hope of at last becoming useful to her brother, and therefore welcome.

As she proceeded, visions of deep distress and difficulty floated dimly through the mind of Marion, who could not entirely close her eyes against the iron truths, and stern realities of life, while considering how totally unsuited her brother was, to endure the pri-

vation of a single luxury, and now he could scarcely have enough to command the most ordinary necessaries.

In the mind of Marion, immediate starvation, and going out as a governess, were the two ideas that most prominently connected themselves with the consciousness of being ruined; for her conception of bankruptcy was of the most terrifying description.

In the few novels she had ever seen, the heroines could always support themselves by selling their drawings; but Marion did not hope to gain an independent livelihood by her slanting castles, and top-heavy trees, though taking in plain work, or teaching music, suggested themselves as possible resources. Marion thought of arrests, bailiffs, writs, and of the world come to an end. The sunny hours of her life seemed suddenly darkened, and she had grown old in a day! In the simplicity of her heart, she imagined that a ruined man of rank and fashion, was like a ruined man in earnest; obliged actually to reduce his establishment! to dismiss

his servants! to dispose of his equipages! to make an auction of his furniture! to part with his plate! and really to live as if he were in downright matter-of-fact earnest, poor! "to exist," as Sir Patrick once contemptuously said of Richard Granville, "on twopence a-year, paid quarterly!"

The slow-moving hackney-coach stopped at last before the gate of Sir Patrick's new residence, St John's Lodge, a gloomy antique villa near Holyrood House, with gabled windows, stone balconies, richly carved balustrades, and pointed roof, surrounded by dusty beech-trees, and formal yew hedges, clipped into fifty unimaginable shapes. Marion was surprised, on hastily alighting, to perceive the whole house glittering with lights, and would have supposed she had made some mistake, had not the bell been instantly answered by Sir Patrick's own man, followed by the usual three yellow-plush footmen.

"Faithful creatures!" thought she, having often heard of old servants who insisted on being retained for nothing; "amidst all

Patrick's distress, this must indeed be gratifying!"

In a tumult of emotion, Marion, throwing off her bonnet, rushed up a broad well-lighted flight of stairs, while, wound up to a pitch of heroism and romantic self-devotion, she thought only of her brother, impatiently longing to fly into his arms, and to express the whole fulness of her affection, and the whole depth of her sympathy. While her heart sprang forward to meet him, she eagerly threw open a door next the staircase, and entered with a hurried and tremulous step; but suddenly her eyes were dazzled and bewildered by the sight which met her agitated glance, while for a moment she became rooted to the floor, like one who had been stunned by a sudden blow. Marion gazed without seeing, and heard without knowing what was said, so unexpected and surprising was the scene to which she had thus suddenly introduced herself!

A murmur of noise and gayety rang in her ears, while the whole apartment was brilliant-

ly illuminated, and the first object which became distinct to her vision was Sir Patrick, seated at the head of a superbly-decorated dinner-table, in a perfect uproar of merriment and hilarity. Around him were placed five or six of his gayest associates, dressed in their scarlet hunting-coats, and evidently in joyous spirits, like school-boys during the vacation, while the whole party presented a most convivial aspect, laughing in merry chorus, and with claret circulating at full speed round the hospitable board.

Marion felt as if her feet had lost all power of motion, while, grasping the handle of the door with one hand, and shading her eyes with the other, she became transfixed to the spot. It was a shock of unexpected joy, and while standing in the deep embrasure of the door, her large eyes dilated, and her lips parted, with an expression of speechless amazement, she looked like a breathing portrait, which an artist might have shown as his master-piece,—young, bright, and graceful, as the first crescent of the

moon, or like the fabled houri of an eastern tale.

The gentlemen all instinctively stood up with one accord the moment she appeared, giving her looks of embarrassed astonishment and admiration, while Marion hastily retreating, in an agony of confusion, heard her own voice inadvertently exclaim, "Patrick!"

"Marion!" cried her brother, in a frenzy of astonishment more than equal to her own, while the flowing bumper which had been raised to his lips remained suspended there, and in an instant afterwards, his tone of surprise became changed into angry imperative remonstrance. "Marion! what brought you here, child?"

Before she had quite retreated, suspecting the real state of the case, and not wishing for any public explanation, Sir Patrick added, in an accent of careless good-humour, "Agnes is up stairs dressing for the ball, so make yourself scarce, and find her if possible. The house is not large enough to puzzle any one

long, but I suppose you mistook this room for hers!"

"Patrick is not ruined after all!" thought the delighted Marion, vanishing in a transport of joy, while her brother's jovial companions became vehemently energetic in expressing their admiration of the beautiful apparition.

"Can that be the darling cherub Marion, who used to call herself my little wife? I wish she may do so in earnest now! She is undoubtedly the loveliest creature that my sight ever looked upon, her eyes glittering like stars beneath that rich cloud of hair! Let us drink a bumper to her health!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, in a spontaneous impulse of enthusiasm, filling his glass, and singing in a fine, full-toned tenor, the favourite ballad,

"I saw her but a moment,
And methinks I see her yet,
With the wreath of summer flow'rs
Beneath her curls of jet."

"That must mean Agnes, for Marion's

hair is brown," interrupted Sir Patrick, in a rallying tone, yet his manner betrayed the excited and exaggerated vivacity of one, who evidently forced his spirits, endeavouring to banish care by ceasing to think. "Be constant for one entire week, and I shall then think Agnes has achieved a wonder indeed."

"You do me injustice, Dunbar!' I must be allowed to beg your pardon! I have not been what is called 'in love' above nine times in my life! Well! you may laugh,—anybody can laugh, but I consider that smile of yours exceedingly malicious!"

"When a man is on the ice, you know his best safety is to keep moving," replied Sir Patrick, dryly. "People talk of two strings to their bow, De Crespigny, but you are never satisfied under two dozen!"

"*Tant mieux et tant pis!* As Rosamond says, 'Thou canst not tell yet, how many fathoms deep I am in love;' how concealment is preying on my damask cheek, and what violent heart-quakes I am continually enduring!

The girl before last that I died for, was my idol for an eternity of three months' duration. I might have continued most deplorably in love yet, if she had not imprudently appeared before me one day in an unbecoming east wind, with considerably more colour in her nose than in her cheek!"

"You are the most observant of men, De Crespigny! If you only pass a young lady at full speed on a staircase, you can describe her eyes, complexion, figure, and expression, before I could be certain whether she has one eye or two! But what is this Irish story I heard about you! Some lady with seven brothers, and you threatened to shoot them all that she might become an heiress! What were the particulars?"

"You seem to know more than I do, or anybody else!" replied Captain De Crespigny, hastily tossing off a bumper to conceal his confusion. "There are so many girls whose peace of mind I annihilate, that it is next to impossible for me to remember them, but I can think of nothing now except my cousin

Marion, who always promised to be beautiful, and has more than fulfilled her promise. Tell me, Dunbar! when does that pearl come out of the shell?"

"If you please, sir!" said a servant, entering, "the hackney coachman is waiting to be paid seven shillings for bringing Miss Dunbar from Dartmore House!"

"Let him wait all night if he chooses!" replied Sir Patrick, angrily frowning away his footman, "as the Irishman said, 'may he live till I pay him!' Tell the man to call again to-morrow,—and next day,—and the next,—to come back in short, whenever he has nothing else to do! Perhaps in a delirium of generosity I may some day think of paying him."

"At our usual rate of payment, seven shillings from you would be equal to L.7!" said Captain De Crespigny, laughing, "let him put it down to your account!"

"Yes! I have already more creditors than pence, therefore one more or less can be of no consequence! That fellow of mine is the most officious rascal!—and he begins every sentence

the same, 'If you please sir, the plate-chest has been robbed!' or, 'If you please, sir, the bay mare is dead!' But I am never pleased to pay when it can be avoided, and especially now. This is one of my moneyless days! My banker's bulletins continue unfavourable! I cannot raise another shilling! The handle of the pump is chained! All my relations have made wills in my favour, but not one of them will die!" As Falstaff says, 'What money's in my purse? seven groats and twopence!'"

"I shall set up a hackney coach, and drive one myself if it pays so well!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny indignantly, "What an extortioner the fellow is! up to snuff and a pinch above it! He deserves to be executed!"

"Don't speak of executions in this house! we have had enough of them already," replied Sir Patrick, forcing a laugh which sounded very like a stage laugh, "What brings me here, if I am to be dunned in the very sanctuary by a set of rascally creditors! You can take the hackney coach home, if the man waits a few hours longer, De Crespigny, and pay

him off! It would be difficult generally to say which of us is best off for ready money, but as Jeremy Diddler says, 'You don't happen to have such a thing as ten-pence there, have you?'"

"No! I make it a principle never now to patronize the paper currency or bullion *ça m'est egal.* Scotch notes are so atrociously filthy, and gold is too heavy for the pocket. I am hastening as fast as possible to my last shilling! Money is a bore! As for you, Dunbar, if you wished to borrow a glass of water, I shall not be the man to lend it! I would not for worlds be included among your 'rascally creditors!'"

"They beset my door so incessantly the week before we came here," said Sir Patrick, laughing, "that I played the fellows an admirable trick by connecting a strong galvanic battery with the knocker of the door, so that the more angrily they grasped it, the stronger was the shock they received. I sat with Wigton for an hour at the window in perfect fits, when we saw the look of astonishment and

terror with which, one after another, they staggered away. One impudent rascal absolutely succeeded in serving a writ upon me for L.200, but happening to have as much in the house, I thought it best for once to pay him off, and ——"

"That is a most remarkable story! almost incredible!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, laughing; "not so much your being arrested, for that might happen to any of us, any day, but your having L.200 in the house, Dunbar! Excuse me there! I have as much credulity as most people, but you should keep to probabilities!"

"If one could pay people off with golden opinions," observed Sir Patrick conceitedly, "I flatter myself in that case, that all my creditors might be more than satisfied."

"When are those fellows to have their next meeting?"

"I wish we knew, that I might give them a harangue on agricultural distress!" replied Sir Patrick, carelessly plunging his whole hand into his luxuriant hair. "It gives me no scru-

ple to disappoint the shop-keeping world! None whatever! These rascals have not the slightest hesitation in making punctual customers pay their bills twice, therefore it is quite fair that others should not pay at all. I could point out a dozen of my trades-people who, knowing they risk only a sheet of paper by re-sending their bills a year after they are paid, make a practice of doing so. 'If the ill-used customer produces a receipt, why then! an angry bow and a sulky apology are all the satisfaction to be got; but if the receipt, by good chance, be lost, then he becomes perfectly cheatable, and no remedy can be had but to pay over again! I have seen the thing happen fifty times, long ago, when I really did sometimes pay my debts, and of course never took the trouble to keep any receipts."

"On such occasions," said Captain De Crespigny, "the offending shopkeeper, when proved in the wrong, should be fined double the amount of his bill, to be expended for the benefit of meritorious men like you and me, Dunbar, who cannot pay once. The sight of

every poor man I meet gives me a moral lesson to avoid poverty, *coute qui coute;* but as for you, Dunbar, prudence and economy are not certainly to be enumerated in the catalogue of your many virtues! As sure as your name is Patrick, if L.1000 dropped into your pocket now, it would be squandered with the liberality of a prince before you walked to the next street."

"Most uncommonly true, De Crespigny!" replied Sir Patrick, ringing to order a fresh bottle of claret. "But in these days of bankruptcies, revolutions, robberies, sudden deaths, and murders, the only way to make sure of enjoying my own is, to spend it immediately. In that case there can be no mistake! I long ago discovered that it is impossible to be both merry and wise; therefore give me joy at any price. Happiness is to be bought, like everything else, if people have only the heart to pay for it. In my opinion a long face and a short purse are the two great evils of existence, both to be avoided at the risk of one's life."

"Perfectly unanswerable, Dunbar! Money

is the patent sauce for giving a relish to everything! It throws dust in the eyes of all the world, till they can observe none of our faults, and yet see all our perfections magnified and enlarged, as we see them ourselves. Misers make money the end of life, but we make it only the means of enjoying existence; a sure ticket to pleasure of every kind and of every degree!"

"One of these years, De Crespigny, your grave will be dug with a golden spade! You are growing mercenary! But every man living is, in one way or other, deranged about money; —those who have none, spending, like myself, to a frantic excess, and those who have much, hoarding as if their very lives depended on amassing another shilling."

"I wish, Dunbar, you would write a treatise on the art of living well, after we have been obliged to calculate that difficult sum in arithmetic, 'take nothing from nothing, and nothing remains!'"

"Why, really, as a shillingless spendthrift, I could say enough to make all of you misers

during life; but for my own part, as long as I possess a guinea, the first man who wants it may get the half. Hoarding is the only enjoyment which increases, I am told, with increasing years; but it is the only enjoyment of life I never intend to taste. I mean always to live rich, that I am determined on; and if I die rich, I shall out-hospital every fool who ever left a will, by endowing a 'Dunbar Dispensary for superannuated *bon-vivants!*'"

"How well the world would get on if everybody were of your way of thinking!"

"Thinking! my dear fellow, I never think! What do you take me for?"

"For a strange being certainly, and for my own particular friend. Besides, as the poet beautifully expresses it in speaking of such friendship as ours:—

> "We have lived and *laughed* together,
> Through many changing years;
> We have smiled each other's smiles,
> And—*and paid each other's bills.*"

"Thank you, De Crespigny! I shall send a file of mine to you to-morrow! Do you remem-

ber the memorable hour at old Brownlow's, long ago, when my first bright guinea glittered in our hands, while he detained us to enumerate all the various uses it might and ought to be put to. I never forgot his oration; that is to say, I have thought of other things certainly during the intervening ten years; but it has often occurred to me, that if I had, as he proposed, hoarded my treasure till another came, I should have been a miser for life. I did, however, squander it then, with the spirit of a gentleman; and ever since, whenever any one lectures on economy, I put cotton in my ears. Wigton, the wine stands with you!"

"Capital claret this, Dunbar! My uncle Doncaster would not have quarrelled with Crockford, if he had given him such a bottle as this! Claret is certainly the poetry of wine, and I should like to have a cascade of this pouring down my throat all day and every day! Your own importation, I suppose! It does your cellar great credit!"

"It has been, at any rate, placed to my

credit in Morton's books. I am very fastidious now, and owe it to myself to have the best."

"I can't tell what you may owe to yourself," said Captain De Crespigny, laughingly turning his dark keen eyes on Sir Patrick; "but you certainly owe a great deal to other people."

"Very true; and I owe you a grudge for saying so. I never can forgive myself for not having been born to a larger estate! L.50,000 a-year would have suited me so much better than my paltry pittance of twenty! These are very hard times! The fellow who supplied this claret might have enjoyed my custom for ten years to come, if he would have waited as long for payment! It is a man's own fault always when he loses my business! The moment he takes to dunning we part! It is a rule with me, and I told him so. He did not take warning! actually sent in his account a second time! a most ungentlemanlike thing to do! an offence I never pardon! so now ——"

"He may retire from business at once!"

added Captain De Crespigny, filling his glass. "Did I not hear that the house had failed next morning! We all know what your countenance is worth!"

"Three farthings a-year, paid at sight! We should make it a principle to discourage duns; but they do occasionally force their way upon me in some unaccountable manner, like a draught of air through the key-hole, and then I can look as grand and immoveable as George the Fourth's statue; but fortune will be in good-humour with us again some day, and take me under her especial patronage, when I shall pay everybody thirty shillings in the pound, and ——"

"Hear! hear! and a laugh! as they say in the House of Commons!" exclaimed Lord Wigton. "Well done, Sir Patrick the Great ——"

"The great what? Your speech is a fragment!" said Sir Patrick, in his liveliest accents; "besides which, it was an interruption to mine, Wigton; and I intended to have said something particularly amusing, if you

had not broken the thread prematurely. It is lost to you for ever now! I am dumb as a flounder; and you may pity all the present company, as they have really missed a very good thing."

"We shall place it to your credit accordingly, Dunbar," said Captain De Crespigny, laughing. "It was rather annoying to have perhaps the only good thing you ever could have said in your life, nipped in the bud. I hate sometimes to see a joke of mine standing with its back to the wall, and struggling in vain for existence."

"Dunbar has talked himself into such a fit of parsimony," said Lord Wigton, laughing, "that he is even economizing his words."

"*N'importe!*" replied Sir Patrick, gaily circulating the bottles. "You are all mistaken, and you particularly, Wigton. I can economize my way up the hill of life as well as any one of you, and shall yet live upon an income of nothing per annum. My plan is, to keep only five hunters—to stay but one month at Melton—to feed upon sunshine—to

fill my head with the rule of three—in short, to become actually quite a pauper in my style of life; and if all things else should fail, I can, as a last resource, turn patriot, and subsist upon liberalism and mob-popularity!"

"That sounds vastly prudent and proper, Dunbar; but all I say is, whatever desperate extremes you arrive at in the way of retrenchment, give me the income you spend rather than the income you have!" replied Captain De Crespigny. "I took a fit of arithmetic one day, and discovered, upon accurate calculation, that scattering L.20,000 a-year on an income of ten, gradually drains off the whole!"

"You are a perfect Babbage, my good fellow! but you know I have expectations from three uncles in Australia, and one in the West Indies!"

"Uncles! except the brave old Admiral, you scarcely possess a relation besides myself in the world; but as long as Sir Arthur lives, you have something to be proud of. The only thing I envy you on earth, is for being his

nephew. I reverence him. I never pass him, rain, hail, or sunshine, without taking off my hat. He is quite a jewel of a man."

"You shall have him very cheap!" replied Sir Patrick, assuming a careless tone, to conceal a great deal of irritation. "What will you bid? I wish he were 'going! going! and gone!' I never knew such an old bore as he is, always interfering about my sisters, and fussing about my debts. The world ought to be entirely peopled with uncles, aunts, and grandmothers, for they all know so much better how to act than anybody else."

"It is setting a very bad example for old people to live very long. My uncle Doncaster took a twenty years' lease of his house in Belgrave Square lately, and told me afterwards, he thought of having the term 'extended' to the period of his natural life! I am sure his life is perfectly supernatural already! What would the old fellow have!"

"Those superannuated people who outlive themselves have nothing else to do but to sit in their arm chairs and find fault! The world

is good enough if they would only think so· but all their world-before-the-flood ideas are picked up in a different state of existence from ours. Every thing changes in half a century—customs, dress, modes of thinking, notions of honour, ideas of pleasure, habits of society—all are turned upside down; so there can be no use in your uncle or mine prosing about the past and the future. There is neither past nor future in my plans of existence now."

"Why, really, if men would neither look backwards nor forwards, there is scarcely a moment of any man's life which is not very tolerably agreeable. The rule that carries me joyously forward through life, is to make the best of everything. We borrow all our annoyances from anticipation of the future, which often turns out perfectly groundless, or from regret for the past. We cannot alter the stream of events; therefore I am for floating along the tide with my arms folded, and looking neither to the right hand nor to the left."

"Quite right; and take my word for it, that in this little trumpery world of ours, ruined men enjoy the best of it. We have nothing to lose—our estates are managed for us—we care not the toss of a farthing about politics—we have no fear of a reverse—we are always the most liberal of what we have—and in short, it is true enough, that the '*ménage sans souci* is the *ménage sans six sous*—'"

"I have generally got through all the difficulties of life hitherto with a hop-skip-and-a-jump; so I mean always to keep myself in practice; but after all, Dunbar, money has its merits, and the best profession for a ruined man is to marry an heiress. They always select the greatest roué who makes them an offer! Why do you not propose to Miss Crawford and her L.60,000?"

"I never answer questions in the dog-days! My dear fellow! L.60,000 would not be a breakfast to me! It would scarcely supply copper-caps to my gun! Besides which, I cannot make a low marriage, and pick money out of the puddle! An heiress at best, always

seems to me, a personification of all my creditors! A person one should marry to please them! but the only thing on earth I would not sell is —— myself!"

"Being beyond all price, of course, Dunbar! I am still insufferably bored at Beaujolie Castle to marry that cousin of mine with a purse as long as her nose, and both I believe are miraculous, but we have not met in the memory of man! Perhaps I may some day yet be obliged to welcome gold from whatever pocket it comes, but I am not very impatient to see Miss Howard at the head of my table!"

"My dear fellow! you would be sitting at the bottom of her table, if Miss Howard Smytheson accepted you! It is unlucky that a fairy-like fortune, and a fairy-like person are so seldom united in one individual."

"I have no objection to marry for money as soon as they are! Love among the roses would not be in my line at all, but when I see gold in a beautiful enough casket, then '*les beaux yeux de sa casette pour moi!*' 'Mammon wins its way, where seraphs might despair!'"

"But if we must choose between them, give me love, and let money take care of itself!"

"Splendidly said! you are growing magnanimous, Dunbar. What has happened to you since we met last? Did I not hear some romantic tale of true-love lately, connected with yourself and Granville's pretty sister, Clara! 'a portionless lass wi' a lang pedigree!" I vehemently contradicted the whole affair, as Lady Towercliffe's entire story was so very unlike you, but ——"

Captain De Crespigny paused suddenly,—filled his glass,—averted his eye,—and pushed the bottles hastily round, for he had observed with astonishment that Sir Patrick's under lip became violently compressed, his white forehead became visibly paler, a bright flash was emitted from his eye, and his agitation became so obvious to every one around, that a deep silence fell over the whole party, which soon after dispersed.

CHAPTER XII.

At ev'ry pause they stretch, they yawn, they dose,
And now to this side, now to that they nod.

DUNCIAD.

One of the greatest pleasures in life is derived from the unexpectedness of events, without which existence would lose much of its interest, and finding herself thus emancipated from school, settled at home, and relieved from her worst fears respecting Sir Patrick, Marion no sooner escaped from her unexpected glimpse of the jovial party in the dining-room, than, lightly carolling some snatches of a popular song, she flew up stairs the happiest of the happy, to find the scene of Agnes' toilette, whom she discovered at last

all joy and flutter at the prospect of a ball at Lady Towercliffe's in the palace.

The softening effect of happiness on stern and rugged natures has been often remarked, but selfishness never slumbers, and the reception Agnes bestowed on Marion partook more of astonishment than of pleasure, and was mingled much more with censure than with approbation. Still, after expressing more wonder than the occasion called for, what could possibly have brought her home, and the most unbounded censure of Mrs Penfold for her "unjustifiable conduct" in sending her, Agnes, having no one better, or rather no one else to talk to, though not violently delighted at the unexpected meeting, gave some fragments of her attention to Marion, whose deep tender eyes were sparkling with affectionate pleasure on again seeing her sister. while her countenance, from recent agitation, looked like an April face of smiles and tears.

"What a storm in a tea-cup you have had at Mrs Penfold's! tiresome old cat! I am

glad it teased her! Dixon! pin that wreath more to the right;—not quite so far! there!—oh! how perfect!" said Agnes, gazing with exultation at her own extraordinary beauty. "Pat must find out some other school for you, Marion! It would never do to stay idling here! Dixon! never shew me that dress again! Wear it yourself or burn it, but blue always looks vulgar! I have lucky and unlucky gowns! Some in which I meet with all the friends I wish to meet, and dance with all the partners I prefer, but that dress is a happy riddance. I remember once being obliged, when wearing it, to dance three times and go to supper with stupid tiresome Lord Wigton! Dixon! fetch my bouquet! not that withered old thing, but the one Captain De Crespigny brought me to-night. Fetch it from the drawing-room."

"So that horrid Dixon is still with you!" whispered Marion, as soon as the abigail's last frill disappeared. "I very seldom dislike anybody, Agnes, but she is very odd. There is a strange gleam about her eyes,

which look so sharp and penetrating, they have prongs that pierce when they are turned on me."

"Yes!" said Agnes, laughing, "she does sometimes look through me till I feel myself nailed to the wall.

"Moreover, she has such a flattering, fawning, cunning manner, that I wonder you can tolerate her for an hour," continued Marion. "We know so little of her, too, that she is like a person fallen from the clouds!"

"Oh! there you are wrong, for Lady Towercliffe says she is 'a perfect treasure!' Consider, too, what low terms she accepts, merely from her desire to serve me! I never saw a creature so preternaturally anxious to be taken, and now, after two years' practice, she really is excellent. Do you remember at the time I engaged Dixon, what a perfect romance her history was! Pat did not believe a word of it; but to do her justice, she made it very entertaining. I hope, at least, the greater part was founded on fact!"

"Why does she wear widow's weeds,—she

did not mention at first having ever been married!"

"No more she did! how strangely beautiful she looks in them,—like the abbess of a convent! Her husband, if she ever had one, which I doubt, is said to have died abroad, and her only wish is never to see strangers. Pat insists she has had some *affaire du cœur*, but I tell him it must positively have been with old Sir Arthur, for she started so visibly one day long ago, and became redder than red, when I said he was coming to dinner."

Seeing Agnes in so unusually gracious and communicative a mood, Marion ventured now to inquire into the state of her brother's affairs, saying, she supposed he must inevitably sell his estate, go abroad, or retrench, as the expedient of planting halfpence, to grow into guineas, had not yet been brought to perfection, even by Sir Patrick, though it had so long been a subject of wonder how he contrived to get on.

"This has been a horrid business!" exclaimed Agnes peevishly; "as for Pat himself, he

will do very well! Trust him for taking care of that. He has always money enough and to spare for his own amusement, though sometimes he would hardly even pay the postage of a letter to save my life. Only think of his bringing me here, out of everybody's way, during the most beautiful years of my existence! Our friends will scarcely imagine that I think it worth chair hire to travel from this burying-place to the inhabited world! What can one do. We shall give some quadrille parties ourselves, but scarcely a living soul is within reach except the Towercliffes, and those odious Granvilles!"

"The Granvilles!" exclaimed Marion, in a blaze of joy and astonishment; "dear Clara! is she here."

"Yes; but she cuts this house entirely, and we are hardly on speaking terms, therefore let me beg you not to attempt any violent missyish, boarding-school friendships in that quarter. I cannot enter into particulars, but rest assured that the less you see of Clara the better for me,—and the better, too, for Pat-

rick. Never, for your life, mention her name before him."

"Why?" asked Marion with a look of bewildered disappointment. "Agnes, I cannot give up Clara Granville!"

"Perhaps, then, she may give you up! She abhors the whole family now! If I must not veto her without rendering a reason, let me tell you that there is a very awkward pecuniary quarrell between Mr Granville, Pat, and Mr De Crespigny. It is merely one of their madcap tricks, but extremely annoying. You have often heard Sir Arthur tell of three Yorkshire baronets, who signed a mutual contract sixty years ago, that the first of them who married should forfeit £10,000 to both the others."

"Yes; and not one of them ever ventured to dispose of himself at so great a sacrifice."

"Well! some years afterwards, the subject was discussed one day in public conclave, at the Harrowgate ordinary, and what should the late Mr Granville do, in company with Major De Crespigny and our father, but, like

a set of madmen, as they must have been at the moment, drew up, for a frolic, precisely such an agreement for themselves, which they signed and sealed, making some of the 150 strangers present act as witnesses. The whole affair had been long forgotten, when Mr Granville married some fright of a girl, all nose and freckles, merely because of her being amiable, or some such whim. She lived long enough to make saints of the whole family, and died after her son and daughter were only a few years old."

"Then how is your quarrel with Clara tacked on to this affair, Agnes? I cannot quite trace the connexion."

"Why! Pat has been very angry at Mr Granville lately about some unexplainable affront; so, having accidentally found the old Harrowgate document, and being very hard up for money, he and Captain De Crespigny are threatening to levy the fine of £10,000 due to each of them, and poor Mr Granville is, as you may suppose, rather indignant, having been all his life stringing halfpence to-

gether, to pay off his father's debts, though no one could legally oblige him. As Pat says, 'more fool he!' You know our brother's favourite expression of contempt is, to describe any one as 'the sort of man who would lock up his money.'"

"What a shocking affair!" exclaimed Marion, colouring with shame and indignation. "As uncle Arthur says, Patrick would do any thing for money short of a highway robbery! Surely, Agnes, he cannot be in earnest."

"Pshaw! never mind being amiable now," replied Agnes impatiently; "we need not act to empty benches! I am already aware that you, Marion, are on the exact pattern of what Mrs Hannah More would bespeak to order for a sister or daughter; but with all you learn at school, pray learn to keep that goodyism out of sight, for I can fancy nothing more intolerable than a young lady turned out on the model of those horrid sententious books, filled with advice to young ladies. Mrs Ellis writes to the 'Women of

England, but she luckily leaves the 'Women of Scotland' to their own devices, without troubling us to be exorbitantly amiable."

"I shall be in no hurry to see Clara now!" continued Marion, dejectedly. "I suppose Patrick will be cut by all gentlemen for such unjustifiable conduct."

"Oh dear, no! Nobody is ever cut for anything now as long as he has money! I can scarcely tell the thing upon earth, except cheating at cards, that a man of £10,000 a-year may not do, and yet be as well received as ever,—and ladies ditto! Any woman who can afford a court plume, and many even who cannot afford one, may fit on her ostrich feathers, and go to court with as proud a step and as lofty a carriage, as either you or I. Your uncle, Sir Arthur, complains that there is no such thing as 'moral indignation' in the world now, and so much the better. What good would it do to anybody? If a gentleman once gets into a fashionable club, he is made for life, and may ever afterwards defy the world to look askance at him."

"Then nobody takes any notice of Patrick's affairs?" asked Marion doubtfully.

"No; except uncle Arthur, who makes himself quite absurd about them; refuses to dine here; turns his back on Patrick at the club, in a most un-uncle-like manner; and performs all sorts of antics to testify his annoyance; but we are both rather glad he no longer comes prosing to this house, and that we need never enter his. The Admiral is a fitter companion for these old pictures round the wall than for us. Do not look at me with that hair-standing-on-end expression! I can't help what Patrick does, and you will soon get accustomed to such things."

"Oh no, never! I hope never! but Patrick cannot surely push that claim in earnest against the Granvilles. He will refund the money, will he not, Agnes?"

"Perhaps, when all his other creditors are paid off. Now spare the whites of your eyes, and do not look at me as if I had five heads, but pray attend to my injunction, and avoid Clara, who is only fit to be a saint in a niche

at her brother's chapel. You may know her at any distance now by her five-year-old dresses and country-cousin bonnets. Richard Granville has taken orders at last, and become a most superb preacher. In short, the Granvilles are good, worthy, dull, respectable people as ever lived, though the very last upon earth that would suit us."

"Do you mean to be severe, Agnes? I hope you are mistaken!" replied Marion, humbled and depressed by all she had heard. "I have sometimes felt, when with Clara, as if goodness were infectious, and never hear of any people better than myself without wishing at least to be in the same room with them."

"Take my word for it, Marion, these enormously good, sagacious persons are better to look at than to converse with. They may be admired at a distance, but the greater the distance is the better; and pray never set up in that line yourself, as nothing is more unpopular. Clara invited me, when we first arrived here, to one of her tea parties! some horrid Granville-isn affair, I have no

doubt! But I knew my own value better than to go. Fancy me, Agnes Dunbar, at a good party!'"

"I hope you might not be so very much out of place, Agnes!" replied Marion, with an arch and pretty smile. "Whenever I give 'good parties' you shall be the very first person invited!"

"Then take my apology now,—previously engaged! Indeed, I may perhaps consider myself an engaged person in every sense, Marion! Captain De Crespigny has already almost proposed several times, and makes no secret of his attachment. Oh, never mind Dixon! She knows who sent me this bouquet and all about it. Captain De Crespigny tells me he has planted all my favourite flowers at Kilmarnock Abbey, and often says what a resource they will hereafter become to me! Here are all the letters of my name grouped together, Anemone, Geranium, Narcissus, Everlasting, and Sweet William."

"Very ingenious," observed Marion, smiling.

"I promised not to mention whose device it was; therefore, Marion, as I am exceedingly particular about keeping my word, if any one guesses where I got this, remember to recollect that I did not tell! But, Dixon, what is the meaning of this! the geranium is broken and these flowers are so withered, they have not surely been in water."

When Marion accidentally looked at Dixon, she was startled to perceive that a mortal paleness had overspread her features, which bore a strange bewildered expression, while her hand, in which she held the flowers, trembled visibly, but she said nothing, and Agnes, in the triumphant gayety of her spirits, rattled heedlessly on.

"One of the rooms at Beaujolic castle, which Captain De Crespigny already calls 'my *boudoir*,' opens into a conservatory filled with rare exotics, but he says I shall be the brightest flower of the whole, though never born to blush unseen, if he can help it! How very droll he is, paying compliments often that would make one feel beautiful for a year.

He said this morning, when Patrick complained of the room being hot, that he wished I would fan it with my eyelashes, and asked for one of them to wear as a feather in his Highland bonnet! Yesterday, when I showed Captain De Crespigny this new pearl hoop, he said I spoiled the symmetry of my hand with rings, as there was not a jewel in the world fit for me to wear, and only one ring that ought ever to be placed here! You should have seen his sentimental look on the occasion, which might have done for twenty proposals!"

"One would have been enough," said Marion, smiling.

"What he said was quite sufficiently explicit, and I only wish he would appear a little more diffident, as his look was most provokingly self-satisfied, when he added, 'how fortunate will be the happy man who places a ring on that finger!' When speaking of the Admiral, too, he always now calls him 'uncle Arthur!' and yesterday, at taking leave, he said in his half jocular, half serious tone, 'I

shall live upon the Bridge of Sighs till we meet again!'"

"Then, pray let him stay there, till he is a little less confident," replied Marion, laughing. "You should teach diffidence in three lessons, Agnes; he has no right to seem sure of success, till he has obtained your consent point blank. You have many admirers to choose among!"

"Squadrons of admirers, but not so many lovers as you think, Marion! The race of marrying men is becoming extinct in the world, so I must not be severely discouraging to poor diffident Captain De Crespigny, who has been setting his mustachios at me so long. Your notions about keeping people in suspense, are quite of the old school, when ladies used all to be upon stilts, but '*nous avons changé tout cela.*'"

"I am sorry for it! We should all have been born when Sir Arthur was, and I wish everybody were like him."

"Spectacles, grey hair, and all! Thank you, Marion, but I am not particular, and

feel quite satisfied to be a contemporary of Captain De Crespigny. If you could but have heard him this morning when he sang the 'Pirate's Serenade,' said Agnes, warbling the words to herself,

'This night, or never, my bride thou shalt be.'"

While Agnes continued singing *sotto voce* for some minutes, her whole heart and thoughts occupied with agreeable retrospections, the eye of Marion again accidentally wandered towards Dixon, and she was startled out of a reverie, into something almost approaching alarm, by observing her attitude and expression. With features as pale and rigid as those of a corpse, she gazed at Agnes, and there was an intensity in her look, perfectly unaccountable, while a dazzling and terrible light glittered in her eyes. Marion with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of astonishment, when she perceived the extraordinary change in Dixon's countenance, but with a private resolution to watch more narrowly than before, what such evident agitation could

mean, she determined as yet to make no remark, but allowed Agnes to rattle on undisturbed, while her own thoughts were filled with perplexity and surprise.

"Yesterday, Marion, Captain De Crespigny actually made me read over with him that proposal scene in the new novel, 'Matrimonial Felicity.' I nearly died of confusion when he doubled down the page, saying, he hoped this was not the last time we should study it together. The story has but one fault, that the hero makes rather a low marriage, and of that Captain De Crespigny expressed an utter abhorrence! I remember ages ago, his making me laugh so excessively with a description of some school-boy attachment he had in Yorkshire! Such a burlesque upon love! It was exquisite! The silver thimbles and wall-flowers he presented to a fair damsel in prunella shoes, and no gloves, while his *gages d'amour* were accompanied with verses borrowed from the Irish Melodies, and passed off as his own. I forgot always to ask what became of the poor deluded girl at last,—probably married before

this time to some fat farmer or thriving shop-keeper, but for my own part, the misery of an unrequited attachment is what I never can know! Captain De Crespigny really is the only person one could possibly have fancied."

A loud and startling crash at this moment interrupted Agnes' delightful reminiscences. Marion instinctively sprang from her seat with alarm, and looked hastily 'round, when she perceived that Dixon had tripped over and thrown down a table covered with china ornaments, on which Miss Dunbar had frequently squandered half her income, even at times when she could scarcely afford a dress. The etiquette being now established that all young ladies, of whatever means, shall cultivate a passion for china and hot-house plants, Agnes had made a collection of second-rate vases, and third-rate tea-cups, interspersed with stunted hyacinths and drooping camellias, at so great an expense that Sir Patrick often recommended her to take a wing of the bazaar and sell off all her trumpery again. The whole assortment now lay in fragments on the floor,

while Agnes delivered herself up to agonies of lamentation, scolding, and wondering, over the ruin of her hoarded treasures, while she pointed out with consternation, how nearly the table had fallen with its edge upon her own foot, which might have lamed her for life. The "fall of china" is a proverbial trial of temper, and that of Agnes did not prove on this occasion invulnerable, while the epithets, "awkward wretch!" and "stupid idiot!" were audibly lavished on the offending abigail.

Marion appeared exclusively occupied in gathering up the scattered fragments of china, and arranging them together, but her eye was secretly observing Dixon, the strange wild expression of whose features filled her with indefinite apprehension. In her countenance there gleamed, certainly, for an instant, a dark smile of malignant satisfaction. Marion felt sure that it was so! Could the poor creature's mind be shipwrecked? Was she insane!—Her look had become fierce and haggard, her forehead of a deadly paleness, and when she caught the eye of Marion earnestly fixed upon

her, she started up, with a frown of angry defiance, and hurried out of the room.

"This is a most calamitous catastrophe!" exclaimed Agnes, disconsolately, "How could Dixon be so intolerably stupid!"

"Are you quite certain it proceeded from stupidity? The accident is altogether very strange," observed Marion, going close up to her sister, and relating all she had observed during that evening in the very lowest whisper, for Marion felt a nervous consciousness that Dixon was not far off, and might attempt to overhear them. A stealthy step was heard on the stair after she concluded, but Marion, thoroughly engrossed with the subject, reiterated once more her conviction that there had been something more than common in the manner of Dixon, whom she advised Agnes to watch very carefully, if she did not part with her soon.

"You were always prejudiced against Dixon, poor stupid fool that she is, Marion. I wish I had sent her adrift before she broke all the china, but it is very unlike you to be so severe!

How can you fancy the creature did it on purpose? That is too bad, when you might have seen how ghastly pale she became!"

"I did see, Agnes! and that makes me wonder only the more! No one ever looked like that, surely, for breaking a few china gewgaws!"

"Marion! speak respectfully of my treasures! But you are in a most censorious mood this evening! very different from common, when you are generally a knight-errant in all our conversations, defending everybody! But nothing pleases you to-night! My admirer first, then my maid, my china, and even Patrick, who certainly behaved exceedingly ill to-day, in not asking me to preside at his party. The pretext was, that we had no chaperon, but I had the greatest mind, in a fit of offended dignity, to leave his house!"

"Your dignity would have been rather put out of countenance, by having to borrow my carriage if you did go!" said Sir Patrick, who had laughingly entered the room unobserved. "Lady Towercliffe may perhaps receive you

in time for her six o'clock breakfast to-morrow morning, Agnes, but unless you make more haste, the supper and dancing will be quite out of the question. Past twelve o'clock, and a rainy night!"

Sir Patrick was a good-natured, selfish man, willing that everybody should be happy, provided it put him to no personal inconvenience, and when Marion took this opportunity to explain the circumstances of her very unexpected return, he merely bestowed a contemptuous whistle on the description of Mrs Penfold's wrath, laughed at Marion's evident anxiety about his embarrassments, and then desired her to set about being happy at home the best way she could, as he thought she might make the rest of her life a holiday now; "And," added he, in his usual gay rallying tone, "forget for ever, all your grievances at Mrs Penfold's, or rather, Mrs Tenfold's, as she ought to be called, on account of the breadth of her person and the length of her bills!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Lively he seem'd, and spoke of all he knew,
The friendly many, and the favourite few.—CRABBE.

SIR PATRICK, like most men who are gifted with more head than heart, disbelieved in all such generous emotions and exalted affections as he had not himself experienced. With a lively defiance of received opinions, his vivacity was unchecked by the fear of giving pain or of causing offence, being perfectly reckless on that score, provided only he could enliven the dull routine of ordinary society. Marion's mingled expression of shyness and animation, her light laughter and ardent feelings, were

refreshing to a mind so hackneyed as his, and though he often checked her sensitive spirit in its full flow of affectionate confidence, by a retort courteous, or rather discourteous, he was nevertheless vain of the admiration she invariably excited, and read, in the eyes of others, the value he ought to place on her beauty and talents.

Agnes' whole mind was so frothed over with folly, and encrusted with selfishness, that unless the wheel of fortune touched upon her personal comforts, she was as impervious to all external impressions as a tortoise beneath the shell, and it was a useless waste of generous sentiments and kind emotions, whenever the heart of Marion was laid open to her. Agnes, who had long since adopted a company manner, and even a company voice, persuaded herself that Marion also, had very cleverly "got up" a character on some imaginary model of excellence, which she acted over to the very life. It seemed to her a naked certainty that the refinement and delicacy natural to Ma-

rion's mind, were in reality artificial; and though the radiance of her intellect, and the sensibility of her eye, were but in harmony with her actions, all testifying disinterested self-denial and invariable affection, still Agnes convinced herself that Marion lived "for effect."

If Marion ever acted a part at all, it was only in concealing from those who might have ridiculed her, the unfathomable depth of her feelings, since she might as well have asked for sympathy from an ice-berg as from Agnes. Knowing that every evidence of sensibility would be received with scepticism, she silently and hopefully waited till some scope might be afforded her for testifying that all which she might have wished to profess, was nothing to what she would do or suffer for those she loved; and if ever Marion repined at any one circumstance in her lot, it was, that she might perhaps pass through life unknown to those she loved the best, because she dared not express, even by a few insignificant words, that affectionate attachment to Agnes and Sir

Patrick, which she would have thought any sacrifice a pleasure, to evince in its full and heartfelt measure.

One privilege of friendship Marion enjoyed in unbounded measure with both her brother and sister. She became the usual depositary of their many grievances and disappointments. Marion had the art,—or rather the instinct, for to her all art was unknown,—of listening in perfection. If Agnes received a dress from her London milliner which did not fit, or if Sir Patrick did not obtain an invitation to some jovial party which he had expected to enliven, Marion became of immediate importance. The annoyance he felt on such occasions could scarcely be exceeded—the death of his nearest relation, or of all his relations together, would have been nothing to it; but Marion could always administer some gentle anodyne to the irritated sufferer, and displayed a wonderful ingenuity in turning up the best side of everything, for the advantage and comfort of others. Nothing melted Marion's heart so entirely as to see Sir Patrick for a moment depressed, as

the very pride and haughtiness of his spirit rendered it, in her estimation, the more affecting when he seemed at all subdued, and on the evening of Lady Towercliffe's ball, she could not but fancy, before he set off with Agnes, that there was a forced vivacity in his spirits which she had never perceived before, and that the tone of his voice had a melancholy modulation when he bid her good night, accompanied by an unusual degree of kindness, always the very worst indication of Sir Patrick's spirits, the consciousness of which, and a thousand conjectures respecting its cause and extent, dismissed her to bed with an anxious mind, and a prayer, even more fervent than usual, for his happiness.

In one house, Marion was understood and loved as she wished to be, and all her young enthusiasm found its best refuge and welcome in the aged heart of Sir Arthur, who felt refreshed and cheered by the companionship of thoughts and feelings as fresh and natural as the flowers in spring, while they reminded him of the time when his own had been as

buoyant and untrodden, as hopeful and gay, as full of kind intentions and generous wishes.

The morning after Marion's arrival at St John's Lodge, she arose by the peep of day. intent on surprising her uncle with a visit during his early breakfast, and gayly anticipating the look of joyful surprise and perplexity with which she would be welcomed, while she rehearsed in her own happy mind, how best to increase Sir Arthur's astonishment. The day was indeed one of matchless beauty, the sunshine perfectly superb, and all around resplendent with light, gayety, and happiness, the white clouds skimming along like swans on the blue sky, the air perfumed with blossoms, every leaf spangled with dew, the painted butterflies, like winged flowers, hovering over the meadows, and the country people exhibiting looks full of mirth, hilarity, and good-humour, as they hastened past to their tasks of daily toil, enjoying those common gifts of a bountiful Providence, the light breeze, the balmy sunshine, the music of birds, the perfume of

flowers, and the joy of natural unfevered spirits.

> "And now, while bloom and breeze their charms unite,
> And all is glowing with a rich delight,
> God! who can tread upon the breathing ground,
> Nor feel Thee present, where Thy smiles abound?"

The whole air seemed full of incense and poetry when the light-footed Marion, with a bounding and elastic step, set forth on her solitary walk towards Portobello, joyous as a bird in spring, pleased with the whole world, and admiring everything with a lightness of heart that cast its sunshine on all she saw. Marion delighted in a wild sense of liberty now, when she contrasted it with her long years of endurance at Mrs Penfold's; and equipped in exactly such a pink gingham dress as Agnes had censured on Clara Granville, with the free air, like liquid sunshine, playing about her glowing cheek, and her light ringlets fluttering in the breeze, the excitement of her spirits became such that she could have run with pleasure across the daisied meadows, and, "glad as the wild bee on his

glossy wing," longed to reach the craggy heights of Arthur Seat, or to linger beneath the old thorns already fragrant with blossom, and steeped in dew.

Marion had picked some flowers as fresh and blooming as herself, while she hurried through the more inhabited parts of the sanctuary, but when passing beneath the palace windows, her steps were arrested for a moment by hearing the sounds of mirth and music. "Can it be!" thought she, in astonishment, "Lady Towercliffe's ball is yet at its zenith!"

Pitying the dancers much more than she envied them, Marion looked at the scene of glorious beauty around her, and was hurrying forward, humming a light barcarolle in concert with the thousand birds in full chorus on every side, when suddenly a loud shout caused her to start and turn round. Marion now perceived with astonishment that a window of Lady Towercliffe's apartments had been hastily opened, and Sir Patrick stood on the balcony waving his handkerchief impetuously

for her to stop, and a moment afterwards she saw him eagerly running after her across the fields without his hat.

"Marion! you lucky girl! stop there!" exclaimed he with breathless animation. "We are all at breakfast, and require one young lady more to make up a last quadrille, so come along; you are my prisoner! What makes you look so aghast! Who ever heard of a girl not liking her first ball!"

"Patrick, you are certainly mad!" said Marion, unable to help laughing at the almost delirious eagerness of his manner. "Pray consider! I am not in a ball dress! I am not invited! I shall look like a housemaid! ——"

"Nonsense! I wish everybody looked half as well! All these reasons, and fifty more, go for nothing. I have set my heart upon it, and you shall not stand in your own light, like the man in the moon. No, Marion! you are to be published immediately under my auspices. You have often expressed a willingness to die for me any day, but that is

not necessary just at present. All I ask is that you shall dance for me! Now, fling that bonnet off, shake your little forest of ringlets, and come along. You will pass muster very well without Cinderella's god-mother to make a metamorphosis."

Unable to resist the out-burst of her brother's extravagant mirth, yet shrinking and abashed, almost ready to cry with vexation, Marion was unwillingly led, or almost dragged by her laughing persecutor into the drawing-room, where, with a look of *naïveté*, and an aspect lovely in the first blush and freshness of girlhood, she gazed in mute astonishment and almost with dismay at this her first peep into the great world of fashion, wishing for her own part that she could have adopted invisibility, and enjoyed the scene as if she were in a private box at the theatre, for as yet her feelings were "*trop près de la peine pour être un plaisir.*"

A bright sunshine streamed into the room, while the gas lamps still dimly glared over the breakfast table, at present surrounded by

three or four hot, flushed, dusty-looking young ladies, with exaggerated colours, soiled dresses, torn gloves, withered bouquets, and exceedingly disordered ringlets, falling in dishevelled masses over their naked shoulders. These ladies, assuming forced spirits, and an appearance of over-done gayety, kept up a rattling, flippant dialogue with about twice or three times the number of gentlemen, some in glittering uniforms, padded and stuffed to the very chin, and others in plain clothes, but all over-heated, over-excited, and over-fatigued, while, in spite of parched lips and blood-shot eyes, they were still endeavouring, with all their might, to be fascinating.

To Marion's unaccustomed eye the whole party seemed like a set of second-rate actors from the theatre, not calculated, by their aspect, to elicit very rapturous applauses, and she privately wondered they were not ashamed to look each other in the face when in so ridiculous a plight. Even Agnes, her own beautiful sister, looked very unlike Agnes! and she felt astonished to find that it might

actually be possible to spend an hour in her company and not be admiring her, but in Marion's very private opinion, her appearance was now as if some sign-post painter had done a resemblance of her sister in the very coarsest colouring, and in the most over-done style of dress and expression.

Agnes had a great deal to say, and no diffidence to prevent her saying it all, therefore she was now plunged into the midst of a very animated dialogue with Captain De Crespigny, talking with a look of conscious beauty and conscious success, in the only style she could talk, nonsense, and making a lavish expenditure of smiles, attitudes, and exclamations, to give herself the appearance of vivacity. Her hair was in a most disastrous state, and her complexion everything but what it should be, while her dress had so completely fallen off at the shoulders, that she might appropriately have sung her favourite air, "One struggle more, and I am free."

The expression of Agnes' countenance became at once perfectly natural, when she

turned round, and for the first time observed, with a start of genuine astonishment, that Marion was beside her, looking at the moment like some being of a better world, or like a graceful water-lily rearing its pure and beautiful head above the turbid pool.

Marion glanced at her sister in a state of smiling embarrassment, as if desirous to claim her protection amidst a scene so new and strange, and taking possession, with a confiding look, of Agnes' arm, joy seemed rushing out of her bright animated eyes, and dimpling in her cheeks, when, under her sister's protection, she gazed around with an expression of timid amusement and curiosity.

"Marion, what mad freak is this!" exclaimed Agnes, with a hot red blush of angry surprise; "Patrick, do take her home!"

"Not till she has been my *vis à vis* in this quadrille, and then we must all disperse," replied Sir Patrick, with a boyish mischievous laugh, while noticing a haughty flash pass swiftly over the brow of Agnes; "I had difficulty enough in getting Marion to come at

all, so she shall not escape me now. De Créspigny, have you engaged a partner?"

"If I had, I would have strangled her!" replied Captain De Crespigny, with an admiring glance at Marion, who stood with her downcast eyes shaded with their long, deep fringes, while an arch young smile played round her mouth, and dimpled her cheek.

"Will you then take the very great trouble of dancing with Marion."

"I shall be too happy," replied he, throwing a world of expression into his fine animated eyes. "I shall do so with all my heart!"

"Marion, your old friend and cousin, Louis de Crespigny. Did you ever see such an ugly fellow!"

"That is the very thing I pique myself upon! I am like the Skye terriers, admired chiefly for my surpassing ugliness," said Captain De Crespigny laughingly, observing the smile and the blush with which Marion listened. "You think me plain; but I wish you saw my uncle!"

"Wear a mask, De Crespigny, if you ever

become as hideous! But in respect to looks, the most unendurable of all living beings is a handsome vulgar man, like the description I hear of that creature Howard, Sir Arthur's pen-and-ink man. I could forgive his vulgarity, if Marion did not tell me that he presumes to be handsome, which renders him utterly insufferable! I wish somebody would put him to death!"

"The fellow has never yet shown himself to me," replied Captain De Crespigny, carelessly. "Now, Miss Dunbar, allow me the honour of the next quadrille with you; and if there be a dozen more," added he, with his most ineffable smile, "so much the better! I consider any other gentleman who asks you to-night as my personal enemy!"

Marion stole a frightened glance at Agnes, while timidly accepting the offered arm of Captain De Crespigny; but her sister had turned away with a look of superb disdain, and was engaged in lively conversation with Lord Wigton, a tall stripling, who seemed as if he were never to be done growing, and who

copied Captain De Crespigny in everything, from the pattern of his watch-chain to the choice of his partners.

Agnes felt invariably more astonished at any deficiency of attention, than at the most devoted assiduity, having accustomed herself to believe that she was always the first object of interest to every gentleman in the room, though diffidence or caution might cause them to exercise their self-denial for a time, by keeping aloof; and it was with more commiseration for Captain De Crespigny's privation in losing her, than for her own, that she accepted the school-boy Peer as a partner, while secretly amused and flattered by the ludicrous expression of awe and admiration with which he usually offered himself. Having talked, flirted, and laughed, through one quadrille and several reels, the clock struck eight! It was an unspeakable triumph to Lady Towercliffe, that her ball had thus been kept up the latest of any during the season; and now the whole party prepared for retiring to their fevered pillows.

Captain De Crespigny, after uttering, as usual, in his most ingratiating manner, a million of absurd nothings, took a sentimental leave of Marion, saying, with his very best smile, and a sigh to correspond, "I shall always remember this evening with pleasure—always! Ten minutes of unmixed happiness are something in this world to be thankful for Life has nothing more delightful!"

These words were said in his usual gay, off-hand tone, while Captain De Crespigny felt perfectly charmed to think what an impression they must be making on the heart of his young and unsophisticated partner. He was at the same time astonished himself, to find on this occasion how much more his heart was on his lips than it had ever been before. Marion was the only girl Captain De Crespigny had yet seen whom he did not feel a wish to trifle with; for during the last half hour, he had been not only amused, but deeply interested, by discovering in her conversation a degree of matured reflection, of *naïveté*, humour, and good-sense, accompanied by a bright-

ness of expression in her deeply-speaking eyes, much in contrast with what he had ever been accustomed to before. Nothing is so rare in manner as to be perfectly natural, without a *soupçon* of affectation; and to this charm was added another, quite as new and unexpected to Captain De Crespigny, though by no means so acceptable, as he became not only astonished, but piqued, at the gay, indifferent carelessness, with which Marion heard, as words of course, not more belonging to her, than if they had been addressed to any one else, his well-turned compliments and insinuated admiration.

Not to be met half-way was new and astonishing to Captain De Crespigny! It seemed perfectly unaccountable, little as he knew how long his character for a ruthless flirt had been placarded before the eyes of Marion, who no more credited the sincerity of his professions now, than if he had been an actor performing on the stage. She considered that it was his part for the evening to scatter civilities indiscriminately around him, while his real feelings

were, she believed, privately consecrated to one, and to one only. Marion's own heart was in armour, protected by the belief of Captain De Crespigny being her affianced brother; and therefore she received his *adieux* with a quiet demure look, succeeded by an arch smile, as the idea crossed her mind how completely she was in the secret of his attachment, and how little he seemed to guess that she was.

When Captain De Crespigny observed Marion's good-humoured careless manner in taking leave of him, he began to fancy it just possible she might still be quite indifferent to his attentions; but he rather indignantly resolved that this should not continue long. It would be a distinction, he knew, to follow in the train of a young beauty so admired as he saw that Marion must be; for a hundred tongues were already talking around him of her matchless loveliness, while he alone had yet enjoyed an opportunity of discovering, that much as she was to be admired by those who saw her, she was still more to be loved by those who knew her; for she seemed to

unite in herself all that he had ever praised in a thousand others before, though he carried no plummet in his mind fitted to measure the depth of hers. Captain De Crespigny had been accustomed, hitherto, always to feign more than he felt; but now, for the first time, he found it necessary to conceal, even from himself, the extent of his feelings; for it seemed as if the last few hours had rendered Marion perfectly known, and for ever dear to him. Slowly strolling homewards, therefore, he gave vent to his thoughts, by singing, in a voice like moonlight, soft and clear, the words of a favourite song:—

"And fare thee well, my only love!
And fare thee well a while!
And I will come again my love,
Though it were ten thousand mile."

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

